MOTTKE THE VAGABOND (Mottke Ganef)



SHOLOM ASH



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Mottke the Vagabond

(MOTTKE GANEF)

BY SHOLOM ASH

Translated and Edited by
ISAAC GOLDBERG, PH. D.



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To Burton Kline

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The translation of *Mottke Ganef* (literally Mottke the thief, scamp or vagabond) here offered to the English reading public, is a close rendering of the original, with a few minor excisions (amounting scarcely to a page in the whole work) agreed to in advance by the author. An attempt has been made to preserve the nervous, fluid prose of Ash's novel, particularly with regard to freedom in sentence construction and sudden shifting of tenses.

As to the names of personages, it may be worth while to remark that Lib, — the name of Mottke's father, is pronounced Loeb, Labe or Libe, according to the dialect employed. The name Old Terach, which occurs in Part Two, comes from the father of Abraham in the Bible (Terah in English versions) and among Jews signifies colloquially a lazy, simple old fellow. Similarly, not a few last names are personal attributes, as, for example, Velvel Chvatt; i. e., Velvel the bold chap.

The words *Rabbi*, *Rebbi* and *Reb* should be carefully distinguished. Strictly speaking, a Rabbi is a doctor

of Jewish law; a Rebbi is a teacher; Reb corresponds in part to the English *Mister*, but, like the Spanish *Don* and Portuguese *Dom*, it is employed only before first names. These three Jewish words are often interchanged in daily speech, Rebbi assuming the function of Reb, or even that of Rabbi.

I should like to record here my thanks to two persons in particular for valuable aid in the translation of the book: to my father, Simon Goldberg, and to my young friend Leo Robbins, the author of many short stories that reveal distinct promise.

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MOTTKE THE VAGABOND

PART I

CHAPTER I

HOW HIS FATHER MARRIED HIS MOTHER

THE marriage of his father, "Blind Lib," to his mother, "Red Zlattke," came about in the fol-owing manner:

Blind Lib was a young man of great repute in the little town. He worked for Zelig, the Shoemaker, the same fellow who had an annual addition to the family. And truly, he was a wonderful worker. His magic fingers could make you a pair of shoes in "double-sewed" fashion: that is to say, sewed in a way all his own with yellow thread and black. The new style was his personal invention, and when our dandy made his first appearance in public, on Passover, with such a pair of shoes, people eyed him in wonder. The young men of the town caught the fashion like an epidemic, and must at once have just such a pair. But nobody could imitate Lib's handiwork, nor would Lib sew another pair like it for anybody else. No amount of money could bribe him.

"I made these shoes for myself, and nobody else shall wear a pair like them."

But of what avail his skill at the trade? He is addicted to dove-catching, and doesn't care to work. In the

midst of the busiest season, just before Passover or The Feast of the Tabernacles, when work lies piled skyhigh on the bench, it is enough for Lib to hear a whistle outside the window, and he is already at the sill. He sees the Gentile baker letting out his doves. He drops his work at once, rushes to the dove-cote, and behold Lib on the roofs of the village, a large stick in his hand. chasing the doves under the blue sky that arches so peacefully over the town. And if his master ventures to object. Lib throws whatever he happens to be working on square in his face, strips off his apron and disappears. Never has he served through a term of employment. And once he gave his master a beating, too. Whereupon the shoemakers instituted a boycott against him, shutting him out of the profession. But before the week was over Lib was working for Yellow Zelig.

"What can you do?" apologized Zelig to his fellow shoemakers. "You must admit, in spite of everything, that the young chap is the best workman in town. There's none can beat him on a first-class job. If he feels like it, he can make you a pair of shoes that's worth sending to Warsaw to put on exhibition in the windows! Here! See! They dance by themselves!" he would exclaim, licking his lips with pleasure at Lib's proficiency. And Zelig passed for a connoisseur.

It was at this time that Lib was betrothed to Red Zlattke, and went promenading with her. On Saturdays people would come across them in the orchards, and on the roads at night, near the outskirts of the village. Red Zlattke, because of Lib, could with difficulty find a position as a servant, for it had pleased him, one day, to take her out of the kitchen of the home where she was working, and walk off into the woods with her for the whole day. In the kitchen, meanwhile, the milk ran

over, the dishes were left unwashed, no dinner was prepared, and the lady of the house nearly fainted with vexation.

"How could a girl do such a thing!"

When Red Zlattke returned, she found her trunk already packed for her. "Go look for another place."

It was moreover rumored that Zlattke stole the choicest bits from the pantry and brought them to her lover. And it must be admitted that under her pillow had been discovered, wrapped in paper, some freshly killed chickens, a piece of fish and the best cakes. Yet nobody in town believed that Lib would ever marry her. More than one of the women who employed her prophesied that Lib would send her off "with a little bundle." and the older men shook their heads and muttered something about a poor orphan being seduced, for Zlattke had neither father nor mother. But there was no help for it. Who was going to risk his life by speaking to Lib about it? Whereupon Lib said to himself, "Just because the village believes that I'm going to play her false, I'll show them what Lib can do!"

So one Saturday night he went into the Rabbi's, and called out, "Rabbi! I want to give you my pledge that I'll marry Zlattke as soon as I'll be free of military service."

"What good is your pledge?" asked the Rabbi. "Do you realize what it means for a Jew to give his sacred oath? And suppose, God forbid, that you should not keep it?"

Lib swore by the grave of his father and by his sick mother. The Rabbi believed him, and sent for Berish, the Butcher, an uncle of the orphan's. That same night they drew up the mariage contract at Berish's, and the Rabbi himself came to the engagement.

A week later, as Lib was out walking with his sweetheart (he had for that special occasion outdone himself and sewed up for his sweetheart and himself two pairs of shoes more elegant than the first, with yellow, red and black thread) nobody uttered a word against him. On the contrary, from every mouth came friendly greetings. Lib was saluted with "Good Sabbath to you," just like any respectable gentleman, and people said to one another, "Well, he may be whatever you like, but he's an upright fellow, just the same. He's going to marry the orphan after all."

Dogle

But not a month had passed before Lib broke the oath which he had sworn before the Rabbi in the name of his sick mother and by his father's grave. He began to pay attentions to Bashe, the Dressmaker. In justice to him it must be admitted that Lib was not entirely at fault. For it was Toibe Yeche, the dressmaker's mother. who had enticed him to her daughter. It had galled her to think that her daughter, who was no mere servant. you will understand, but a dressmaker, should sit in the agony of spinsterhood while a common orphan should walk off with such a prize of a husband. You see, after his engagement Lib had given up dove-chasing and had settled down to business. Now he spent all his Friday nights and Saturdays at the dressmaker's, where they read love stories, and the boys and girls would come together on Saturdays and sing songs. Bashe and he were as yet ashamed to be seen walking together, so they hid in her home, And poor Zlattke moped her Saturdays away in her mistress's kitchen, waiting for Lib. She cried her eyes out, all in vain. The town was already gossiping about the affair and her mistress said, "I told you so,"-that she had warned Zlattke not to go too far with Lib, because he would desert her. Zlattke maintained silence.

It was the first day of Shevooith (the harvest holidays). Zlattke lay in hiding in the dark entry of Bashe the Dressmaker's home. As Lib entered, she perceived in the dim light the shoes that he had made especially for his engagement to her. This brought such a sharp pang to her heart that she dashed the entire contents of the phial of vitriol, which she had hidden in her apron, over the young man's face. Lib, his face burning, fell to the ground. She rushed into the yard, stumbled and began to scream for help.

The crowd that was attracted by her cries found Lib stretched out, his face all blistered, his sight gone, his clothes burned through. Red Zlattke was kneeling over him, tearing her hair, beating her breasts with clenched fists, crying, "Save him, folks, save him! See what I've done!"

The doctor arrived and Lib was taken to the hospital. Zlattke followed, carrying his hat and collar, still tearing her hair and crying without cease, "See what I've done to him! See what I've done!"

For the next couple of days she was lodged at the police station, but they did not hold her. No sooner was she released than she ran to the hospital. But she was not permitted to approach Lib. She haunted the building like an abandoned dog. Then she obtained another position and here she cooked young chickens for him, bringing them every evening to the hospital. These the guard took from her, as she was still prohibited from coming near the patient. He did not wish to see her, she was told, Nevertheless she continued to bring her cakes and chickens.

Once she bribed an attendant to let her pass. She entered, and when she looked upon Lib a faintness came over her. His face resembled nothing human; it was rather some wild creature with closed eyes that lay

there on the bed before her. She threw herself down before him, clasping his feet, burying her head between them and kissing them, all the while weeping.

At first he was stubbornly silent, not even moving. Then he began to stammer, asking her to come nearer. She did so, lying down beside him like a dog. Lib, with all his strength, brought his fist down upon her head. She placed her head right under his fists, so that it might be easier for him to strike her, and after every blow her eyes ran with tears of pain. But her face glowed with a certain happiness.

The guard came to interrupt this strange scene and drove the woman out. She kept bringing her cakes, however, without missing a day. As soon as she could steal away she would rush to the hospital window, question the guard, and run after the doctor, kissing his hands in gratitude. After the first blows she went into Lib more confidently than ever, and the same strange scene would be enacted again and again.

In a few weeks Lib was discharged from the hospital. His face was still covered with plasters, and his eyes bandaged. But Red Zlattke had sold her entire trousseau, — all the dresses that she had sewed, and the bed-clothes which her mother had left her. She had saved up a few gulden from her wages at the place where she had served during Lib's stay at the hospital, and with him she took rooms at a tailor's house. There she cooked meals for him, and brought him preserves that she would purloin from the pantries of her former mistresses. At night Zlattke could be seen leading Blind Lib out by the door, where she would seat him comfortably upon some bed-pillows; and later, when he was able to walk, she would lead him by the hand through the village.

At times, when a whistle would sound in the street,

and the Gentile baker would let out his doves — they would fly in a circle above the market-place, and Lib would hear the noise of their wings overhead — he would raise his head and grope helplessly about. Zlattke understood. So she would place her head under his fist, and he would rain down blow after blow.

A few months later the plasters were removed from Lib's face, revealing a burned visage, with a raw, reddish skin that had grown over his entire countenance. One of his eyes had been burned out, but the other had been saved. He could scarcely see with it, however. From that time on he was known as Blind Lib. Before long he married Zlattke quietly; there were no invited guests. The old assistant of the Rabbi performed the ceremony and Uncle Berish brought a ribsteak from the shop and provided a handsome dinner. And to show what a good fellow he was, he added a gift of a pair of socks into the bargain. To work was out of the question for Lib - he said that he had forgotten his trade. So he would spend his days loitering about the streets. Zlattke got back a former place and brought her husband food as before, while he drank up her meager earnings. Later, when she was about to become a mother, and was unable to work, Lib began to pick up odd jobs on the street.

And from these parents was born Mottke the Vaga-

CHAPTER II

HOW MOTTKE THE VAGABOND CAME UPON EARTH

THE news of his coming was received with no particular gladness. This is how it all happened:

Blind Lib — he was now known by no other name - lived in The Cellar with Zlattke - who had so lost her color that by this time she should have been called "the yellow" rather than "the red." - Here with them dwelt such folks as paid no rent, but had, rather, a claim upon the place through long occupation of it. For the cellar was under a ruined house, and had formerly served as bakery. Half of the place was occupied by Faygel, the fruit-woman, with her baskets, sacks, and filthy burlap-bags. It was she who held first claim upon the cellar; she had lived there since the days when it had been a bakery. The other side was occupied by the tall spooler, nicknamed "Adam's apple" by the street children because of the prominence of that part of his anatomy. Every summer day, before breakfast, he would go out into the street with his large spools that took up fully half the thoroughfare, and the children would wonder how on earth he ever found room for all that apparatus in the cellar! The third neighbor in the cellar was Meyer, the womens' teacher, who, being a nephew of Favgel, shared something of her right of possession. His place was in the corner, near the window. To be sure, they called him the womens' teacher, but he wasn't really that, although a few little girls used to come in after breakfast, and he would teach them to read from the Tsena Urena, indicating the text with his pointer. But he was indeed an expert letterwriter, and to him the women came to have him write letters for them, or read one which they had received. At such times Meyer would place his spectacles upon his nose, take the letter over to the window, and read it for the astonished lady, who, with open-mouthed awe, would wonder how Meyer could extract all that out of such a little piece of paper.

The fourth resident, and the most important in the cellar, was Blind Lib. He really had no claim at all upon the place, but who was going to quarrel with him now? He had stolen in one winter's morning with Zlattke, and, placing his bundle of old clothes against one of the walls, set up housekeeping then and there. And even at that time he had already quite a family. For Zlattke gave birth every year. Bearing children, indeed, was with her an important enterprise. She enjoyed a great reputation as a wet-nurse, whose milk made children grow into healthy creatures. Her own children she would feed, in the Yiddish fashion, with a little bottle, and regularly sold her mother milk to another woman's child. Since Blind Lib was anxious for an income, Zlattke made him an annual present of a child, and Lib himself earned whatever else was needed at his job as street-porter.

One autumn evening, at the approach of the Jewish New Year, when the days rapidly become shorter, Lib came home from his work. The cellar was filled with a steaming warmth, and a smoky draught blew from the kitchen. An odor, almost a taste, of something being fried, pervaded the entire place. "Heaven

knows," he thought, "what Zlattke can be making in the kitchen." Yet it was nothing but onions that were so noisily frying and filling the room with suffocaing smoke. Blind Lib's mouth began to water, and he hurried to call in his children from the street. Whereupon it seemed that tots of various sizes and shapes came running from every direction. Some even crawled on all fours, out of corners, like mice. Lib gathered them all about him, and clapping his hands chased them over to Zlattke. She began to scold.

"What are you hurrying the breath out of me for? And here I can hardly stand on my feet!"

The last sentence fell harshly upon Lib's ears. He knew that Zlattke did not often complain. He looked at the baskets and the onions that Zlattke regularly carried about, and saw that they had not been touched. He felt a sudden tug at his heart.

"Zlattke, weren't you out today?"

"No, nor would you have been either, if you felt the nausea that I did all day long. I spat gall, I tell you."

"What's up now, Zlattke?" he asked taking one of the children up in his arm while another cuddled next to his boots.

"What's up, you ask? Trying to make believe stupid. He doesn't know!" she replied, sarcastically, from the stove. "If you really don't know, ask the little birdies. They'll tell you."

"What? Another little mahmzer on the way?" queried Lib, half sadly, and half in wondering surprise.

"Woe to your days that a father should call his own children by such a name!" And she spat in disgust. "Fie on you!"

Whereat Blind Lib became milder and said, with a lifeless smile, that seemed to come from his sightless

eye, "So another little one is coming? Zlattke, you're a grand woman!"

"Does it cost you any health? What do you lose by it? Your grandmother's legacy?"

"Grandma's legacy or not, let's have a bite to eat, Zlattke."

Meanwhile she brought out a large platter filled with fried potatoes and placed it on a box. The children commenced to dig in with their fingers. Blind Lib, a spoon in one hand, with the other placed an overturned box before his wife, who sat down nearby, took a potato in her hand, held it before her mouth, but did not eat. She supported her head with the other hand, moaning softly from time to time.

"Why that groaning, Zlattke?" asked Blind Lib, struggling with a hot potato between his teeth. "It's only one more kid. That means more nurse business for you."

"More business," she moaned, looking angrily at her husband.

Lib knew his mate very well, and felt that this was no time to start a quarrel. "There'll be business, anyway," he said to himself. And he turned once more to the savory hot potatoes, juggling them between his tongue and his teeth.

A few weeks later Yentel met Zlattke on the street. Yentel was a mecklerin, that is to say, she served as employment agent for the better-to-do housewives, and acted in general as their efficient commission merchant. Zlattke was taking some potatoes on trust from a farmer, and immediately recognized Yentel,—the same Yentel that people called "the old lady with the wide skirt," for she was reputed to carry regularly almost a hundred pounds of goods in her skirt, across the border. Zlattke

indeed, was only too noticeable, and when Yentel had taken a good look at her, she smacked her lips, cat-like, and greeted Zlattke with, "Again? Well, may it be with good luck!"

"It is heaven's gift," smiled Zlattke, in embarrass-

ment.

"Pretty far along?" asked Yentel, eyeing Zlattke's figure professionally.

"Seventh month, I believe."

"That'll be just right," nods Yentel. "About the same month as the wealthy daughter-in-law of that women from Zhachlin."

"What can you mean?" queries Zlattke, inquisitively, although she begins to suspect and feels a little strange.

"I mean that you'll be well off at this wealthy lady's house, and they'll pay you a pretty penny, and treat you like a queen."

"What, can't the woman nurse her child? Is she weak?"

"Weak or not, she knows she's a rich lady, so she can afford to hire a wet-nurse. Does she lack anything? Would to God that you and I lacked as little as she!"

"And how much is there in it?"

"Oh, we'll come to an understanding, all right. They've been asking me for a month already, to be on the look-out for a good wet-nurse. Who can there be better than Zlattke? And don't worry about the wages!"

"Really," says Zlattke, with humble embarrassment before the high praise of the other. "She can inquire anywhere she pleases about my milk. I nursed a nephew of Mayshe Pinshever's, and two of the Silberberg children. And there are others also."

"We know all that without asking. Further talk is unnecessary. Settled. I'll go right over there with you. Just put on a clean apron. You'll get your deposit soon."

"Clean apron, dirty apron, I'm the same Zlattke."

"No, I'm in earnest. These people want no Gentile wet-nurse for their daughter-in-law. The husband is pious and wants a Jewish woman. Gentile wet-nurses they say, make children grow up with weak brains, and a distaste for study. They've had me on the hunt for a Jewish one for weeks. And you'll earn a pretty penny, I tell you."

The next day Zlattke received her deposit for the milk that Nature had provided for her own child. And that night Lib had meat for supper, and slapped his wife over the shoulders, saying, "Didn't I tell you so, Zlattke? Another kid brings more business."

But all that night Zlattke was in ill-humor. Just why, she could not herself explain. So she answered, "May a bone stick in your throat, by our one and only God, and stop you from talking so much."

And the future Mottke reposed peacefully within his mother's womb, accompanied her to the market-place, crawled on all fours with her wherever she went, dragged the heavy sacks and baskets with her, not at all concerned with the fact that his mother had sold the milk which rightfully belonged to him. For as yet he was well fed — and why should he worry about the world outside? He wasn't there yet.

As the time for Mottke's arrival drew near, the old lady to whose daughter-in-law Zlattke had sold her milk, saw to it that the women who attended Zlattke placed a clean sheet in her bed. The midwife was found at the right time, hot water was ready on the

stove, and Mottke the Vagabond was immersed in an atmosphere of intense heat.

Zlattke made little fuss. She was accustomed to these things, and before Blind Lib returned from the sexton with the little printed sheets that were to be tacked up on the wall as a shield against the Evil One, a terrible cry rent the whole cellar. It was Mottke announcing his arrival.

The first week, until the day of his circumcision. everything went well for him. He lay swaddled in a pillow, and there were visible only his two black, sparkling eyes, that seemed to run over his dark countenance like two little black mice. Every moment Zlattke would take him affectionately to her breast. The mother-in-law of the woman to whom Zlattke's milk had been sold saw to it that Mottke sucked his mother's breasts a good deal, so that there should be plenty of milk for her daughter-in-law's son. She brought Zlattke the best of everything; now rich soup, now preserves. milk, and even a bottle of wine. It was not only a divine merit—feeding a poor woman in dire necessity but, what was more to the purpose, it ensured a good supply of rich milk for her grandson. Mottke required no second invitation. His face turned often to his mother's breast as he lay there perspiring on his pillows. as if in a sweatbath. Anxiety seemed to nestle in his dark forehead, on which already there curled a wet lock just like his father's.

Four sheets, on which were printed selections from the daily prayers, were nailed on the four walls, and kept the Evil One away. Every evening the cheder children came in to greet the new guest, and recite "Hear, O Israel" in his behalf.

On Friday night Lib's fellow street-porters assembled

in the cellar to give the newcomer their best wishes. The old grandmother, who had bought for her son the honor of standing godfather to Mottke, prepared a party with peas and beer, and Lib's friends perspired in the overheated cellar, drank beer, chewed peas and congratulated Blind Lib. It was one of the chief delights of the latter to preside at the circumcision of a son of his. He becomes a somebody, a person of note, when his wife bears him a male child. Everybody comes to visit him: the Dayon (Synagogue Judge) and the Mohel (Performer of the Circumcision) and all kinds of well-dressed Jews come down into his cellar, and they call him *Mister* Lib, and it's Mr. Lib here, Mr. Lib there, and they all eat geese and drink beer, and it doesn't cost him a kopeck.

And this time, through Mottke the Vagabond, Lib is enjoying his chief delight.

The new-born child was brought over to Lib's friends on a new, freshly covered pillow.

The godfather, as we have seen, was the same young man for whose son Zlattke had been employed as wetnurse. He took Mottke and passed him along to his father, who was wrapped in a long, wide prayer-shawl. The father, in turn, gave Mottke into the keeping of the Dayon, who was sitting on the chair. Lib looked around, found himself between the judge and the highly respectable godfather, and felt honored in their company.

Suddenly Mottke gave a scream that seemed to shake the very foundations; he had felt the first wrong of all he was to experience, and could not understand the reason for it.

Zlattke was standing by, still pale, and was weeping. She wore her white bonnet and the white kaftan, which she had received as a gift from the Zhachlin woman. All about her beamed the holiday faces of her guests, which seemed altogether out of harmony with her overheated, coarse features, dark and hard as a sole that has been well battered out on the pavement.

She stood there, distracted and sad. Somehow or other the pomp of the whole ceremony failed to impress her. After all, who and what was she? Zlattke, the basket-carrier. And how did she come to be the mother of a circumcised child? And here was the Dayon saying "Good Luck" to her, and all the others making a fuss over her; she is even invited to a seat. They place the infant in her hands. They congratulate her! And after all, what does the whole business amount to?

Blind Lib sits well up front in the little synagogue where the ceremony takes place. Cakes and brandy are passed out. They all drink his health and he thinks, "It's a fine thing to have a circumcision. You get cakes and brandy, and money, too, and you become a somebody, respected by the entire community. Too bad you can't have a circumcision party every day."

CHAPTER III

MOTTKE REBELS AGAINST SUBSTITUTES

FEW weeks later, on a beautiful sunny afternoon, Mottke was reposing in an old basket, in which Faygel the fruit woman had, during the winter, kept her rotten apples. About Mottke's tender little body was wrapped an old shawl, worn out by wind and weather. In his mouth was stuffed an old piece of linen in which had been tied a piece of sugar, at which Mottke, without cease, bit and sucked. The little muscles about his lips contracted energetically around the linen rag, from which he sucked his nourishment, - life itself. His little black eyes were half closed, and sleep hovered over his brown little face like a dream. The upper half of his countenance: his eyes, his narrow forehead, and the moist black hair that stuck to it, recalled his father. The lower half, with its energetic mouth, the short jaws and the soft smile, resembled his mother. His face was so calm that one would have thought the child slept. But Mottke was not asleep, as was evidenced by his intermittent screeching. He would begin to cry and scream so long that his little sister, who part of the time tended him and the rest of the day played in the street with the children of the neighborhood, came to his improvised cradle and stuck the linen rag back into his mouth. Whereupon Mottke would begin to nibble again, sucking away at his hands or at the rag as if he had been given a rich fountain of milk.

The rays of the sun, before they could reach Mottke's

basket and warm his little hands and face, had first to find their way across the gutter before the house and then through the cellar window with the old rag stuffed in one of the panes. I don't know whether Mottke. later in his checkered and wandering career, ever had time to think of himself and his lot. But it seems to me that now, as he lay in his basket, illumined by the sunbeams and taking pleasure in their warmth, while a philosophic, somnolent peace hovered about him, he surely must have been thinking of some important subject. Thinking, for instance, how it used to feel, once upon a time, when he sucked with his lips, to have a nourishing fluid come to satisfy him -how good it felt, how warm, in all his little limbs. And now, for all his pulling, all his sucking, nothing came, and his little stomach remained empty, and became cold, and he felt as if he had somehow or other been deserted,—an orphan. Once upon a time, when he pressed his lips to his mother's breasts, it was so warm, and he felt so near, so much at home. Where had that warmth disappeared,—the warmth that used to take him so near to itself and hold him so tightly? Something like this must have filled Mottke's thoughts, as he lay there nibbling away in vain at his little hands.

But soon there came an end to his philosophical calm, and Mottke exploded into such a wailing that the whole cellar was plunged topsy-turvy, and the entire neighborhood echoed with his cries. Mottke had discerned that something serious had occurred, and he was shrieking his protest. At first the cellar paid little attention. The street, too, was by this time accustomed to Mottke, and moreover, there were plenty of children there to cry and scream their various woes, so that a mere addition made no impression at all. But this time Mottke was

an exception. For he was intent upon proclaiming to the world that a gross injustice had been practised upon him. To his present outburst there was no end. Old Meyer, who sat at the window, adorned in his large spectacles and writing a letter to America for a woman, was the first to notice Mottke's revolt. At first he thought it was the customary crying that was so often heard in the cellar and on the street - the cry of a hungry child — so he went over and, as usual in such cases, put Mottke's own hands into his mouth. This time, however, the child refused to be deceived. He had already discovered that nothing came from his hand. Reb Meyer then tried to stick the rag into Mottke's mouth; Mottke sucked once, twice, and found that nothing came from here either. So he let the rag drop and began to cry harder than ever. Reb Meyer looked at him in astonishment, puzzled at the reason for Mottke's prolonged wailing. It was the first time the cellar had heard such crying. Until now, when Zlattke would hire out as wet-nurse and leave a child at home, and the rag would be stuck into the infant's mouth, it would cry and cry until it got tired, and then take to the rag after all. The result was, that either the child died, or else it pulled through the crucial period. But Mottke refused to stop crying. In vain did old Meyer attempt to continue the writing of the woman's letter, hoping that Mottke would soon quiet down. The latter howled louder than before. He would permit no writing letters while his wrongs remained unrighted. Nor would any little girls be taught the Tsena Urena. Old Meyer went out into the street to hunt up Hindele, Mottke's older sister, to whom Zlattke had entrusted his bringing up.

Hindele was eight or nine years old at most. Since

her fourth year she had been raising the younger children of the family. When her mother would be gone as wetnurse, the infants were left in Hindele's care. It was she who administered the bottle and the rag. She had already nursed four children in this manner; of these, two had died and two survived. Hindele herself was but a child, and beside the fact that she liked to run about the streets, she alone had to attend to providing food for the infants. For Blind Lib looked upon his offspring as so many birds, and sent them out into the street to pick up, like the birds, old crumbs, bits of rvebread, white-bread, meat and other such articles as were superfluous in well-to-do households and that were given for running an errand, washing dishes or some similar service. This time Meyer found Hindele at Blumele. the Dressmaker's, where she was washing dishes for a bit of bread and a pot of borsht. Old Meyer had to look over the entire neighborhood before he located her at last. When Hindele heard that Mottke was carrying on so badly that Meyer had had to hunt her up, she stopped in the midst of her dishwashing and fairly flew homewards. She was no less puzzled than old Mever. and tried to quiet the child with the old methods that had as yet never failed her in her long experience. She placed his hands into his mouth, then tried the rag and sugar, and finally had recourse to the last resort—the bottle of milk and water, mixed with whatever had been left over in the kitchen. But when this proved no more successful than the other means, and Mottke refused to take anything into his mouth, and threw off, with both his feet, his mother's shawl, and yelled till it seemed that the beams of the ceiling must split, Hindele's amazement turned to fright. It was the first time in all her practise that such a thing had occurred—that a child of the cellar

and one of Zlattke's at that, should refuse the emergency bottle. She was completely at a loss as to what to do. The lusty yelling continued. She took the child in her arms, she rocked it, she sang it lullabies, — but still the crying continued. Whereat Hindele herself commenced to cry, and to yell together with Mottke. For a moment it seemed, she had forgotten herself and thought that she, too, was a child, and had the right to cry. But Reb Meyer soon roused her from her childhood dreams. He recalled to her who she was.

"Why are you standing there, crying like a baby? What's the matter with you, Hindele? A grown-up girl like you! Your mother'll kill you. . . . What have you started in crying for, anyway?"

"I don't know wh-what to do. He w-won't take the

bottle," sobbed Hindele.

"Go call your mother. The child must be sick," advised Meyer.

Hindele wondered how it had not before occurred to her to call her mother. But in her heart she feared to do so, for she knew that her mother had been sold to the child of another. Yet she took old Meyer's advice and ran to the Zhachlin woman's place for her mother.

But she was not permitted to see Zlattke at once. When Zlattke is a wet-nurse for a rich family, they treat her well, and at this particular place she was kept like a queen. She slept with the child in the best room of the house; moreover they saw to it that she went dressed in the best of clothes, in white kaftan and a spick-and-span apron. And she was fed on the best of food. If they were preparing a fine soup the wet-nurse was not forgotten. "She is nursing our child." And to tell the truth, it would have been an ideal existence for Zlattke

to be a wet-nurse. During such days she herself was relieved of the burden of bearing another child of her own. released from the drudgery of moving about the marketplace with the heavy baskets, from hustling over the roads. She ate well and slept as long as she pleased. But the thought of the child she had left at home pained her. And every time she raised the other woman's child to her breast, she suppressed a sob. More than once, with her limited intelligence, she thought how good it would be, if only she received such fine treatment as now and were permitted to feed her milk to her own son. . . . At times, when her milk gave her breasts pain (for the other woman's child could not consume all the milk that welled up in Zlattke's breasts), and she was forced to squeeze it out with her own hand — at such times she would think of her own Mottke at home, and would feel a strong animosity towards the other woman's child, and wish to harm her. . . .

For a long time Hindele stood waiting in the kitchen for her mother. She was not allowed to approach, for Zlattke was feeding the Zhachlin woman's granddaughter—a little girl of Mottke's age. When Zlattke came out of the warm bedroom, her full breasts protruded from her open kaftan, and the milk was still dripping from the fat nipples. For a moment Hindele did not recognize her own mother. Never had she beheld her so rested and so fresh. Her cheeks were full, and red, and on her head she wore a white bonnet; she wore, too, a freshly laundered kaftan and apron. Hindele felt awed, overcome by a deep respect which she had never before felt, and was for a moment ashamed to state the reason for her coming.

"What's the matter?" asked Zlattke, frightened. Hindele was silent. Suddenly she burst into tears, as if to protest her complete innocence in the matter which she was about to relate.

"Mottke is crying. He won't take the bottle. He's sick, mamma."

When Zlattke heard that her child was sick, she forgot entirely that she was a bought woman,—threw a shawl over head and, with breasts still hanging out of her waist, ran across the market-place to her home.

A few minutes later Mottke had his perspiring face buried comfortably in his mother's warm bosom, and with that energetic little mouth of his he was sucking away at her breasts without stopping for breath, as if he were drinking from the very fountain of life itself. And over his being came that warmth that he had felt in the early days. . . .

But Mottke's good fortune was fated to be of short duration. There soon appeared in the cellar the grandmother of the little girl whom Zlattke was nursing, in a richly beribboned bonnet, and a gold chain about her obese neck that seemed to cover up half her bosom. She spoke with a look of extreme piety upon her face, rolling her small, short-sighted eyes, with a smile upon her thick, greasy lips.

"What ails the child? Isn't he well?" And she came over and tapped Mottke's stomach with her fat,

stubby fingers.

Zlattke felt embarrassed before the rich old lady. She pulled her breast from out of Mottke's teeth and replied, with a bashful look, as if excusing herself, "He's only an infant. He can't get used to the bottle."

And then, pouring out the bitterness of her heart upon Hindele, she began to scold her.

"Why did you come running after me? Why couldn't you quiet the child yourself? What are you always

running about the streets for?" And she commenced to beat her daughter.

The wealthy visitor restrained her. She took out some change and divided it among the children who had come running from all directions when they heard that their mother was home. To Hindele she gave more than to the others — a whole five-kopeck piece, and said to her, "Come sometimes to me, with Mottke, to visit your mother. It's all right. Come into the kitchen. The servant will give you something nice. You'll come, won't you?"

Then she smiled into Mottke's face, tickling his little stomach with her fat fingers.

"Ha-ha, you little bawler, you. You . . . Upon my word, he's grown up into a healthy little fellow, may no evil eye gaze upon him. Twice as large as our little girl." And she slapped his chubby legs. "May no evil eye gaze upon him." she repeated to Zlattke, and then took Zlattke away with her.

Hindele was left alone with Mottke, who began to cry all over again. And again Hindele was at a loss as to what to do. He refused his own hand, he refused the rag, and even the bottle. And he continued thus till his father came home. Blind Lib made short shrift of him. He began to give him a proper scolding, and when even this failed to intimidate little Mottke, he turned him over on his stomach and spanked him. For a long time Mottke continued to cry till his tears and screams were stopped by sleep. And as he lay sleeping they stuck into his mouth the rag and the piece of sugar in it. From that time onward Mottke learned to be satisfied with a rag.

Now and then they would bring him to his mother. Zlattke took great joy in these meetings, and if nobody were in sight, she would steal her breast out of the other child's mouth and give it to Mottke. Once he even refused her breast, so accustomed had be become to the linen rag.

When Zlattke beheld for the first time that her child refused her breasts, tears came to her eyes.

And once, some time later, when Mottke was eight or nine months old, Hindele brought him to her mother as usual. Zlattke held him on one arm and the foster child on the other, feeding her, when suddenly Mottke began to quarrel with the other child, and scratched the little girl's face. The little victim let up a fearful howl, so that her grandmother and the rest of the household came running to the scene. When the young mother saw the red scratch that Mottke had made upon her daughter's face, she fainted dead away. After that Mottke was never permitted to visit his mother during the whole two years that she was nursing the little girl.

Meanwhile Mottke outgrew the old fruit-basket. During the time that the other child was drinking his mother's milk he cut his teeth and began to shift for himself in the matter of his livelihood. He began to eat everything that he could lay hands upon.

CHAPTER IV

MOTTKE'S FIRST DEPREDATIONS

Thad been bad for Mottke when he had to lie in his basket, and wait until his sister or old Reb Meyer should think of him and give him the bottle. He had been forced to remind them every time by his lusty yelling, that he, too, was among the living and needed sustenance. Besides, the cellar had become too familiar with his voice to give it any special attention. Scarcely had he outgrown his basket, however, and become able to crawl about on all fours, than he began to lead an independent existence. He ate everything: from bits of left over bread to an old boot, a basket, a sack, — anything in the cellar. But his favorite dining-room was Faygel's basket of rotten snow-apples.

In a corner there stood, year in and year out, Faygel's baskets of last year's apples, rotten peas and old plums. Through the long winter nights the baskets had frozen together, and the fruit that was decaying in them fermented from one basket into the other. No one could any longer have guessed what kind of fruit they contained: they were all covered with the same mold—and exhaled a sweet odor that permeated the entire cellar. In winter the odor even contributed warmth to the place. This, then, was Mottke's favorite dining room. It seemed as if Faygel had collected all the decayed fruit so that Mottke might nourish himself with them. And during the long winter nights, when

the wind beat against the frozen windows, he lived on these fruits.

The first time that Mottke discovered this new base of food supplies, and filled himself with everything that he found, he became so sick that everybody was sure he would die. His mother was straightway summoned to him. Zlattke tried to force her breast into his mouth but Mottke refused it — refused even the bottle. She sat by him and wept. It was night, and all in the cellar were asleep. From his corner came Blind Lib's sonorous snoring, while Zlattke sat in solitary vigil over her child, weeping. Mottke lay in fever, his eyes closed, breathing with difficulty. Once, awakened by his mother's weeping, he opened his moist eyelids and looked at her with his black eyes. It seemed as if he understood his mother. and that he was looking at her with particular care, so that he would recognize her later on and remember that she had wept beside him.

Next day Mottke was much better, and began again to nibble about Faygel's baskets. But this no longer affected him. He could eat anything now, even his father's old boots, without suffering any evil consequences. He acquired a stomach of iron and a steel digestion.

All this, while winter ruled in the street and Mottke was restricted to the confines of the cellar. But soon came spring. The sun began to filter into the cellar, stopped at the steps and looked into the room with its beams. In the cellar preparations had begun for Passover. Zlattke, who was already on the way with another child, began to give her household belongings an airing in the street, scouring her dishes and making a general spring cleaning. Together with all the other things in the cellar, Mottke, too, felt the need of an

airing, and he made bold to crawl out of the dismal hole on all fours. He finally succeeded in climbing the steps; from here he surveyed the street, and found that the world was larger than the cellar.

For a few moments he remained on the steps. He basked in the warm sun and it felt pleasant indeed. He looked out upon the thoroughfare with mistrust, and was afraid to crawl further. Between the street and the cellar was a wide gutter, which had to be crossed before reaching the roadway. Mottke tried several times to cross this, but failed. He sought in all directions for someone to happen along and help him across the cellar threshold, and sure enough, it was his sister, little Hindele herself, she who had brought him up, who came to his assistance, and helped him across the threshold to his life. . . . She took him by the hand and brought him into the street.

Here some small children were playing. Women were busy washing and cleaning their casks and their chairs and the white woodwork, for the approaching holidays. And they whitened the window frames, while their children and belongings alike disported themselves in the open. Mottke crawled in and out amidst the piled up furniture and the playing children. At times he was almost trampled under foot, and once a large chiffonier came near falling upon him. He seemed to be everywhere at once, under everybody's feet, poking his nose into everything that was going on.

Soon his eye was caught by a little girl who was sitting before her house eating, with evident relish, a plate of bread and milk. Mottke took a fancy to the dish and crawled over to the little girl. For a moment he stopped and meditated, and looked at her enviously. In a second, however, he edged up to the plate, stuck his nose

into it, and began to lap the milk like a puppy. At first the child looked on in surprise, unable to understand what he was about. Then she burst into loud crying. Her mother came rushing out and beheld Mottke calmly licking the milk up from her daughter's plate, while the poor little thing sat, spoon in hand, crying her eyes out. Whereupon the mother exclaimed angrily, "What do you call this? Whom does he belong to? Away from here, you ugly brat!"

But Mottke was not to be scared off by this outcry, and did not release the plate until the woman tore it out of his grasp.

"May my enemies be tortured by nightmares! Whose brat is this?"

"That's Zlattke's youngest," offered one of the women who had come out to discover what all the noise was about.

"There you are! Blind Lib has sent another nuisance into the street. Now we won't be able to trust a child of ours beyond the threshold."

"Away from here!" And the other woman shoved him off.

Mottke retreated. The sun was shining, and it was warm and pleasant, so he decided to crawl forth in search of further adventure.

At a second doorway he met some tots mainly of his own age, seated amidst the bed-clothes that had been put out for their holiday airing. They were eating buttered rolls. One of them, a mere infant, dropped his roll and began to cry. But nobody noticed it. Again Mottke stopped awhile and eyed the children in surprise. Then very quietly he picked up the roll from the ground and began to eat it.

When the crying child saw that Mottke was eating

his roll, he broke into such screaming that people thought there was a fire somewhere.

In a moment the tot's mother was at the door. But this time Mottke had to do with Shprintze, the Seamstress, — a woman with a sharp tongue: one of the kind who lets the whole world know, in unmistakable tones, if anything happens to her or hers. People avoided her like the pest, for it was enough merely to give her the chance to talk, and her mouth would spout fire that scorched everything in sight. When this worthy woman beheld the new brat that had come out "to waylay people in broad daylight," she made such a commotion that people ran to the spot from every direction.

"Just look! Help! Help! The scamp is eating up everything I own! Zlattke has let out her little mahmzer to rob children in broad daylight!"

And she seized Mottke by the hand, brought him back to his cellar, and thrust him into it, shouting, "Keep him in there! The idea of letting out such a mahmzer to rob all the children in the street!"

Zlattke happened to be washing a shirt for Blind Lib to wear on Passover. Hearing somebody hollering right into the cellar, she came to the door, her sleeves rolled up, her bonnet on her head. When she saw Mottke in Shprintze's hand, and Shprintze's pointed eyes and blue lips spurting sulphurous fumes, she tried first of all to get Mottke out of her clutches. Mottke, in the seamstress's hands, looked like a victim of a robbery, rather than the perpetrator of one. He was trembling with fear, and could not understand why he was being scolded. At the sight of his mother he began to bawl. This grieved Zlattke so that a wave of pity towards him welled up within her, and she felt as if her heart would break. She jerked Mottke out of Shprintze's

hand and exclaimed, "How dare you scold my child! See, he's trembling all over like a leaf. What has he done? My child, my poor little child!" And she took Mottke impulsively to her, and perhaps for the first time in his life, kissed him tenderly.

"Just see, will you, how she's kissing him for what he's done. So, it's his mother that teaches him his tricks! He'll grow up into a fine thief," prophesied Shprintze.

"May your tongue be bitten off, and may you never live to see the day," retorted Zlattke, defending her child. He'll be a Rabbi,"—and she kissed Mottke on the head.

Mottke nestled his little head in his mother's arms, and looked from there with his two sparkling black eyes. He listened to the conversation that was going on about him, without the least concern. It was so comfortable there in his mother's embrace, — so peacefully pleasant.

"May you grow up into a fine healthy fellow," wished Zlattke, as she kissed his head again, and sat him down in a corner near her. "There, sit near mamma. And may that wretch never live to see her evil prophecy come true!"

But scarcely had a few moments passed, and the mother was again busied with her housework, when Mottke was again on all fours in the street. He had had a taste of what it was like, and from that day forward he sought his livelihood outside. Everything was free to him, and he appropriated to himself whatever he came across. He crawled through open doors and picked food off the tables. If he spied a child in the street with a roll, he snatched it out of the child's hands and ate it up himself. If a woman stopped with a basket of apples, he would edge up to the basket and purloin a few. More than once had Zlattke been disgraced in

her neighbor's eyes because of him. More than one woman had dragged him back to the cellar by the ears and repeated prophecies similar to Shprintze's.

Mottke became the terror of the street. Whenever he was spied crawling forth on all fours, the mothers pulled their children into the house, closed the house gates and the doors of the rooms, and as he made his way up the street one neighbor would pass the warning along to the other, asif a storm were rapidly approaching. "Mottke is coming! Look out! Mottke is coming!"

CHAPTER V

MOTTKE GOES TO HEBREW SCHOOL

IT was a cold gray winter morning in the cellar. The frost, which during the whole season had glazed the windows, advanced from the door and the panes to the walls, and had begun to decorate the cellar with its cold snowflowers. Everything inside the place was frozen. The fruit baskets grew together and became a solid mass of ice. In a corner near the window Reb Meyer was huddled, murmuring his prayers. Old Faygel, wrapped about in her nondescript coverings, sat as if she were built into the wall, amidst the fruit casks, and quietly peeled potatoes which rolled from her lap into the pot. Blind Lib, who had only just got up, his head all covered with feathers, his stomach gnawing with hunger, looked about in all the corners for old barrels. hoops, or baskets that might be chopped up into firewood and heat the cellar. He cursed and shouted, as was his wont when he first awoke and had not yet taken a bite. Zlattke, with her little ones, still lay abed, covered with old rags, bits of canvas and outworn clothes. It was warm there; for the children, with the warmth from their little bodies, kept the mother comfortable. She took them to her just as a hen takes its brood under her wing. Among the children, Mottke. with his two black eyes peeped through his mother's arm. He was still dirty from vesterday's potatoes. How nice and warm it was here in his mother's bed!

And it was on such a morning that his fate was decided.

For soon Blind Lib spied him in his hiding place, and suddenly bethought himself that it was high time to put his child upon the road to self-dependence. So he began.

"Look at that, will you! The little brat's still abed with his mother. Get out! Go look for wood so that we can get the stove agoing."

Mottke cuddled closer to his mother and tried to hide. She pitied him.

"What do you want of him? He's only a child yet. Let him stay here."

"Bah! A child, do you say? Five years old already! He can put down a whole plate of potatoes as big as a soldier's, and when you need a bit of wood for the stove there's nobody to fetch it. Out! Out of bed, I tell you. I'll get the strap in a second!"

Then old Faygel chimed in. "It's already time you set him to learning something," she suggested. "We can't let him hang around here. Yesterday I left some borsht and a half a loaf of bread for supper. I come home, and there's no borsht and no bread. Mottke's already done away with it. It's impossible to leave anything in the house." And as she spoke, her shrunken gums seemed to peck away for all the world like a bird.

"He can eat me up, and all I own," roared Lib. "Must I work for him, too? Such a grown-up scamp ought to pay his own keep by this time. Out! Out of bed this second!"

"Just see how they've all commenced to pick on him. He's in their way. The child's cold — it's freezing down here. I won't let him out. Stay, Mottke, stay with mamma!" And Zlattke took him closer to her, while he held his head under her arm so that nobody in the room should see him.

"It's time, just the same," came from Reb Meyer's corner, "that he went to Hebrew school. Let him learn, at least, to say the morning prayer, to make grace. He's growing up like a regular goy."

"If you were a genuine father you'd be thinking about

that," came from Zlattke to her husband.

"Then let him get out of bed. I'll take him to the Talmud Torah."

"Very well, then, and let me see you begin to be a real father to the boy. It's about time," Zlattke replied tearfully. "Well, get up Mottke. Get out, and your papa'll bring you to cheder." And she stroked the little fellow's head.

But it was not to be as easy as all that. Mottke made believe that he had heard neither the shouting of his father nor the kind words of his mother. He nestled closer than ever to her, and refused to be cajoled. Nothing was of any avail until Zlattke herself got out of bed and Lib drove him out with the strap.

Zlattke soon discovered an old vest of Lib's and dressed Mottke in it. She put on the shoes that she had bought him expressly for the holidays, and tried to rouse the little chap's enthusiasm for Hebrew school. Faygel presented him with the two biggest apples in her stock, while Hindele ran out to a nearby store and bought him two tempting frosted cakes. And old Meyer gave him a brand new primary-book, with large letters, which he had bought for the sole purpose of teaching his little girl pupils.

But it was all in vain. Mottke took the two apples, the cakes and the school-book, but he refused to enter the school-room. He clung desperately to his mother's apron. His father lashed him with the strap, and tears rolled from Mottke's eyes onto his cheeks; but he kept

right on eating the apples just the same, and didn't move

from the spot.

At last Blind Lib's patience came to an end. He seized the child by the shoulder and pulled him into the street. Mottke's howling roused the whole neighborhood. He kicked with both feet till his new shoes flew off; he lost his hat and the cakes and the book. Zlattke picked them all up and hurried after her son, begging as she wiped the tears from his eyes, "Mottke darling, be a good little boy, go to school."

Still he continued to yell, and suddenly wormed out of his father's grasp. There he lay on the pavement, screaming his lungs out while his father beat him over the head with the strap.

"Into cheder with you, I say! Into cheder!"

His mother sought to protect him, and received the blows meant for the child.

"Mottke," she entreated, "be a good little fellow. Go to cheder, Mottke."

Passers-by begin to gather, despite their urgent affairs, and stop long enough to ask what is the matter. Upon hearing that it's a child who balks at going to school they scold him.

"Into cheder with you, you little bum. To school with him!" And then they run off to their business.

At last, God be praised, Mottke was brought to school. Blind Lib perspired all over, with sweat running down his cheeks. Mottke, himself perspiring generously with a wild look upon his face, and tightly grasping the apples and the cakes, stood and glared at the Rebbi, who was holding a miniature cat-o'-nine-tails in his hand pacing up and down the room, where the children were all seated on low benches around the wall.

"Dear Rebbi," begged Zlattke, "teach my child how

to read the holy tongue." The Rebbi stretched his long neck from between his stooping shoulders, and bent over to Mottke. With his sparkling, greenish eyes that looked out of his pale countenance, he inspected the new student.

"So that's the little fellow who doesn't want to go to school? Come here, little shaver." And with two of his thin fingers he gives the child a pinch that brings tears to his eyes. "Do you know what they do to a boy that doesn't want to go to cheder? That's what they do to such a boy." And he pointed to the cat-o'-ninetails.

Mottke, frightened at the very start by the appearance of the Rebbi, began to cry in subdued tones.

"I'm a poor woman," explained Zlattke tearfully. "I can't pay you much. Two gulden a month, with God's help, I'll save up out of my own food; only teach him how to read Hebrew. God help me; I'm afraid that he shouldn't grow up to be a . . . I'm afraid to say the word:—a bad child. He doesn't want to go to cheder."

"Just leave him to me," assured the Rebbi. "I'll see to him." And he sat Mottke down with a thump upon the bench nearby, and turned the leaves of a book whose pages were stained and moistened by the tears of children.

"Here. Take a look into this book. What's that? Repeat after me, my boy. Aleph. Now then: Aleph!"

But Mottke refused to look into the primer. He gazed at his mother, and seeing that she was about to leave the schoolroom he hopped off the bench.

"Aha! You're a little tramp altogether!" exclaimed the Rebbi, and he pinched Mottke's cheek once more with his two thin fingers, while his green eyes flashed like a cat's, and before Mottke had time to look around, he was lying on the bench, on his stomach, and the straptails were dancing over him, like fiery tongues. The Rebbi accompanied the performance with his sing-song utterance, "That's how you do to a boy who won't go to school!"

The little boys and girls of the class, — five or six years old on the average — sat about the wall in nervous concern, their eyes bespeaking their uneasiness as they watched the Rebbi execute punishment upon the little recalcitrant. One or two began to whimper, but most were already accustomed to such scenes, and after the first excitement, were little impressed. They munched at their rolls and cakes, or they played jacks, repeating, from force of habit, the letters of the alphabet. "Aleph, Beth. An aleph, a beth."

This time, however, Mottke did not cry. When the Rebbi had released him and put him down near the children, he sat in motionless, stubborn silence. One of the children tried to strike up a conversation with him, but Mottke shoved him away with his elbow, and continued to look towards the door with his shining eyes. And no sooner had the Rebbi sat down at another table with a child, than Mottke was at the door. He dashed out, his little pants falling down as he ran through the streets to his home.

When Zlattke noticed him in the cellar once again she felt as if the earth had opened at her feet. She could have slain the child on the spot. But when she looked into his childish eyes, and saw his innocent, entreating gaze, her heart melted with pity. She was silent, for the tears were choking her, and she took him to her, beat him, kissed him, and spoke with deep, sad feeling.

"My child, my bad, bad child, what will become of you. What, O Father in Heaven?"

And that evening, when Lib, as usual, unbuckled his belt to give Mottke a beating, she protected the child again with her own body, and interceded for him.

"Lib, Lib, he's but a mere child. It's cold outside. Let him stay home until the warm weather comes!"

CHAPTER VI

MOTTKE FINDS A COMPANION

DURING the year he grew up, and more than once earned his own piece of bread. He began by helping his mother carry her baskets to the various houses where she was employed. He went with her to the market, clambered up the peasants' wagons and helped his mother haggle with the dealers. And once it came about that, while she was counting eggs out of a peasants' basket Mottke helped her count, with the result that two eggs found their way to his pocket - after which he added them to his mother's purchase. She took them, and said nothing, so that he was encouraged to repeat his trick. Seeing some young chickens on another wagon he pulled his mother over to them. The woman at the wagon scolded Mottke, and told him to keep his hands off the chickens, but already he had passed one along to his mother. She began to haggle with the woman.

Once he went with his mother to the kitchen of the woman whose daughter she had nursed; for Zlattke had since that time become quite friendly with the household, and used to bring them butter and eggs. She was greeted most cordially in the kitchen, and the servant took a liking to Mottke.

"So that's the bawler?" asked the grandmother, looking at Mottke, who was hiding behind his mother's apron in embarrassment.

And Zlattke, no less embarrassed on his account,

replied, "Yes, thank God, he's grown up into quite a little chap."

"And does he go to cheder?"

Zlattke was again embarrassed.

"He's only a child. Still tied to his mother's apron strings."

"No,no. That's not at all good. A youngster must go to school; must learn to read the Holy Law," objected the grandmother, shaking her head as if Mottke were already beyond hope.

Soon Channele came running into the kitchen—she of Mottke's age, whom his mother had nursed. The little girl was a healthy child, her cheeks ruddy and chubby as warm rolls, her hair still wet from washing. She wore a new dress and a neat pinafore.

Zlattke had a strange feeling towards all the children she had nursed for others. For it seemed that they were hers, and yet not hers. The children that she had thus fed with her own milk she loved, and yet she hated. She could not be indifferent to them. So that when Channele entered, Zlattke rejoiced to see her, took the child on her arm and kissed her.

"My dear little Channele! How are you? Have you forgotten your nurse so soon? It was I who brought you up, dearie."

Mottke, seeing his mother take this strange child in her arms was likewise overcome with a queer sensation. He hated the child his mother was caressing as if it were one of her own, and yet, at the same time, liked her, too. He was ashamed to look at her. Meanwhile the grandmother put a piece of buttered bread into his hand.

He began to eat the bread and forgot all about the little girl. But soon he stopped munching, and looked from his mother to the child in confusion.

The grandmother took Channele from Zlattke's arms, wiped off Zlattke's kiss with her apron, and took Mottke's mother and her basket of butter and eggs into the next For a moment both children looked at each other. Mottke was embarrassed, and held his piece of bread in his hand without knowing what to do with it. The little girl, however, was bolder; she looked him square in the eves and showed him the new apron she had on. Then she showed him her ear-rings, and her curls. Mottke beheld all this in silence. Soon she took him by the hand and led him to her play-room. He gaped about him in astonishment. Everything was so spick and span, and there were so many play-things. Here was a large hobby-horse. And a real wagon. And two birds, and a broken soldier with cymbals in his hand. The little girl showed him the toys and asked whether he had such nice things, too. Mottke shook his head, but said nothing.

First he played with the toys, and began to laugh. And he pulled the horse's tail, just as he had seen the peasants do in the market-place when their beasts refused to move. The little girl laughed loudly with him.

"See! That's how you twist a horse's tail if you want to make him go." And he demonstrated the tail-twisting method.

She laughed all the louder. Then she showed him her cat, and asked, "Do you pull a cat's tail, too, when you want to get her started?"

Mottke eyed her from head to foot in deep scorn and shook his head. "You don't play with a cat," he replied. "And you don't twist a cat's tail," he added, in such positive tones that the little girl was overwhelmed with shame at her own ignorance.

Mottke soon tired of the toys and looked at the little girl herself. Her cheeks were so red, and so chubby. He passed his warm, dirty hand over them, and she offered no objection. Suddenly he thought of something. He brought his little face close to hers and began to lap her cheeks with his tongue, just like a puppy. She made no show of resistance, and laughed again. "What a fool he is!"

Mottke could chum around with no child of his kind. No sooner did he meet any children for the first time than he'd fight with them. The result was that the youngsters of the street avoided him and left him to himself. But on the market-place, where he could go among the peasant's wagons with his mother, he found another companion — the hurdy-gurdy man's dog.

At every fair there was sure to come to the market Notte with his hurdy-gurdy. He would plant his instrument in the middle of the square, assemble the peasants with the music, and for five kopecks the blue bird in the cage would, with its beak, pull out cards upon which were told the whole future of the purchasers. At times Notte would bring with him the little girl in the cheap pantaloons, who rolled in a hoop. Mottke liked these tricks so well that every time he saw Notte's hurdygurdy and the blue bird, and the girl with the hoops. he ran away from his mother and her baskets and made a dash for them. But most of all he was attracted by the dog Burek that Notte pulled along after the hurdygurdy. It was a clean-shaven poodle, whose hair originally had been as curly as that of a sheep. But his owner had so trimmed him that he resembled a miniature lion, with a tuft of hair at the tip of his tail.

At the fairs Burek was not a dog, but some queer creature dressed in a skirt, with a hat on his head, and after each tune he would carry around in his mouth the card which the bird had picked for some customer. This he would exhibit to the bystanders and collect money. Mottke was not at all pleased at the dog's various antics. He pitied the animal, and hated its owner because he had turned the dog into something entirely different than Nature had made him.

But Mottke loved the dog when he was in his kennel, in the yard, and in leash, like every other dog, fulfilling his duties to his master, pulling at his leash and barking at people in general.

He had made the acquaintance of the dog on the market-place, where, in a soiled dress, and thin from underfeeding, he went about on his hind legs with the cards in his mouth, begging kopecks from the peasants. Mottke had seen him in this guise, and had been immediately seized with pity for him. He had then followed him home and seen Notte tie him by the chain to his kennel. He wanted to go over to the dog, but the latter barked at him. This pleased Mottke, and he began to make friends. Every day he would bring to the animal a share of all the things he himself got; rolls, bread, and the like. And if he stole a half-pound of butter from some dairyman's basket, and didn't bring it to his mother, he thought straightway of his dog and brought it to Burek. In time Burek came to be a good friend of his. and allowed him to come very near. Thus Mottke would visit him very often in the kennel, would sit down at his side, take him in his lap and have little tete-a-tetes. This was the only living creature to whom Mottke poured out his heart: to him he entrusted all his secrets. And once, when Lib had beaten his mother.

and Mottke had witnessed the whole affair, he was overcome by a feeling that he could not understand, so he ran off to the dog, lay down beside him, and whispered into his ear, "Do you know? Pa's been beating Ma again. Terrible beating. She cried. I'll grow up and hit him back for that. I'll give him a black eye."

The dog listened, thought it over, rolled his eyes, stared for a while into space, became serious and murmured something to himself.

"They've turned you into a girl with a bonnet on your head. And I don't want to go to cheder. I don't want to. Let him beat me, too, if he wishes to." And Mottke shouted louder and louder into the dog's ear.

Burek stretched his fore-paws, stuck his head forward, closed his eyes altogether, raised his ears, and began to bark with a hoarse voice that sounded almost human, as if he were attempting to speak definite words.

And Mottke understood him.

CHAPTER VII

MOTTKE LEARNS A TRADE

In a little while Blind Lib bethought himself once more of his son, — that he must be made into a somebody. This did not come about spontaneously, for it was Berish the Shoemaker, the old master of the trade, that reminded Lib of his duties toward his son, — the same Berish that had taught Lib himself. Berish met him one Saturday night at the Shoemaker's Synagogue. Although Lib had long ago given up the business, yet he mingled with the workers, who looked upon him as one of their own.

"What'll be the end of your son, anyway?" Berish had asked him. "You're letting him run around idle,

and he'll grow up to be a thief."

"What can I do with him?" retorted Lib. "He

simply will not go to school."

"Let him learn a trade, then, just as his father did. I remember when your father, Zelig the Driver, came to me with you one Sunday morning. Oh, you were a little rascal, all right, I tell you. You refused to do a stroke of work."

"And you beat me with a strip of leather so hard that I feel it yet," laughed Blind Lib, with both his living and his dead eye.

"Bring him to me. Just as I made a man out of his father, I'll do the same for the son, God willing."

"How long will he be apprenticed?" asked Lib.

"Same as you. How old is he? - Seven? He'll be

with me till he reaches twelve or thirteen. By that time he ought to know the trade well. I'll give him board and lodging, and make him a hat for the holidays. And then, when he's become a skilled worker, I'll pay him, the first year, five roubles — and after that I'll give him all of ten. We take good care of other people's children. You know my wife: she hasn't any of her own and she's like a mother to the others."

"Yes. I remember Dobzhe — and her pinches, too. She tore bits of flesh out of my arms, and used to lock me out of doors in the coldest weather, and gave me watery borsht for dinner. I tell you, Reb Berish, you have a fine wife."

"Well, I'm not going to divorce her on account of a mere apprentice," laughed old Berish. "True enough, she pinched you, and at that you never turned out to be much. Well, let's go over to Sarah-Channele's tavern, and we'll talk it over there."

At Sarah-Channele's, where you get a glass of brandy on the sly, with home-made cakes and herring to go with it, Blind Lib sold his son for six whole years into Dobzhe's hands. He took a rouble deposit for the first term when Mottke, in six years around, would commence to earn money. And old Berish grew talkative over his glass.

"But he mustn't run away from me, and he must mind his master and his master's wife. And go errands when he's needed. Be sure and tell that to him, now."

"Don't worry, Reb Berish, he won't run away. And if he does, I'll bring him back by the ears."

The next morning was a beautiful late summer's day,
— the day before Jewish New Year's, when the apples
and pears are ripe on the trees, and seem to beg to be
plucked and eaten. On such a day Lib took Mottke

and led him by the hand to Berish the Shoemaker. The small market square was filled with fruit that the peasants and the dealers had brought to town. The atmosphere was redolent with the scent of apple and other fresh fruit. On such a day did Lib bring Mottke into the narrow, smoky workroom of Berish the Shoemaker. The windows were closed because Dobzhe was suffering with a cold and was afraid of a draught. In fact, no window had been opened during the whole summer. Inside the air reeked with the odor of mouldy leather that had been rotting in the corner for years, ever since Berish had been a shoemaker. The lady of the house was not in when Mottke arrived. Berish, surrounded by his assistant and a couple of apprentices. sat bent over the small table and was hammering on a sole.

"Here's my boy," announced Lib.

Old Berish raised his thick, high eyebrows, brought his spectacles (whose lenses were cracked) higher up on his nose, eyed the youngster critically, and hollered into a corner, "Dobzhe, Dobzhe, come here, will you? A new apprentice."

And soon, from the dark cellar there appeared a tall, thin creature, wrapped with rags, sheets and shawls, as if it were mid-winter. Across her face was tied a hand-kerchief whose corners were knotted on her head, so that she looked for all the world like a witch. The scarf over her ears was already dark grey, — the same color as her face. This was Dobzhe, the master's wife. At first she did not speak, but glared with her grey, lustreless eyes, — like those of a dead horse, — and stuck out the tip of her tongue between her thin, wrinkled lips, which were covered with dust just like everything else in the house. It was a long time before she spoke, and

when finally she did, it seemed as if the words came, not from her, but from some hollow vessel.

"Whose is he?" she coughed.

"Lib's," was Berish's curt reply, as he pointed to Mottke's father.

She turned to Lib and scrutinized him for a few moments. And then, to Mottke, "You'll grow up into a somebody, just like your father." She nodded, and with a wave of her hand went back to her corner.

"I'm leaving him here with you, Reb Berish, and I want you to be a father to him. You may do to him what you will. Beat him, if he doesn't mind you. You're feeding him now, so you've got the right to beat him. — Do you hear?" Lib admonished, turning to his son. "You must mind your master and his wife, or else I'll beat you to death. Do you hear?"

Mottke was silent, and his father left.

Berish told him to sit down, and gave him a string and a lump of wax to twist into a shoemaker's thread. Mottke, not knowing what to do with the articles, played with the string and looked about him, his eyes distended in curiosity. He saw the two high beds that seemed to take up the whole room; they were littered up to the ceiling with bed-clothes. He looked at the dust-laden pictures that hung above the beds, at the shelves cumbered with boot-legs, old shoes, leggings and scraps of leather. He gazed about inquisitively in this new home of his, where he was to serve for six full years; he observed his fellow workers, two boys and an old Christian, who were busy hammering nails into soles. Beside the benches lay leather, soaking in water, and from the barrel came a disagreeable odor. He looked at the little windows with the network of cobwebs that decorated the panes, their sills covered with

a confusion of leather-scraps and threads. From the outside the sun was attempting to steal through the windows, but the cobwebs barred the entrance.

Soon Mottke was startled from his observations by a dig in the ribs. He turned around and beheld the mistress, who had suddenly loomed up beside him like a dark spectre. From between her feet glided a black tom-cat with phosphorescent eyes, which stroked itself with its red tongue.

"Here," she commanded, thrusting a can into his hands, "go fetch some water."

Mottke felt happy. He liked everything here; it was all so new to him. He seized the can, ran over to the pump and was back in a jiffy. Dobzhe pointed to the barrel, whereupon Mottke poured the canful of water into it and with alacrity rushed forth again, returning as quickly as before. After this he sat down once more, waxing the slippery thread. He then resumed his observations. This time the black cat had caught his eye; it was tied to the bed by a long rope, yet attempted to follow its mistress wherever she went. And to Mottke it seemed that the mistress and the cat had grown into a single being, no longer to be separated into its original parts.

Then came another nudge at his side. "Come now, chop me some wood," and she gave him, for this purpose, the chopping-knife. With no less alacrity than before Mottke took to his new task. His own home had already accustomed him to such chores, and, to tell the truth, he was beginning really to like this place. But as he gazed at the tom-cat he was seized with a great desire to chop off its tail.

Again he sat down on his chair and commenced anew to pull his thread through the wax, continuing, as he did so, his survey of the premises. The mistress had by this time kindled a fire, settled in the dark corner behind the stove and fallen asleep. The cat climbed up in her lap and likewise fell asleep there. Through the house echoed the rhythmical tapping of the hammers upon the soles. The master sat over a boot, and everybody else was engrossed in his work. The clock ticked away monotonously, and soon the entire household, — master, mistress, tom-cat and all began to oppress Mottke with ennui. He wanted to get up and run away.

He longed for the street, and looked through the little window, seeing how the sun was trying in vain to penetrate the cobwebs. A lonesomeness came over him. He would have made a dash through the door had not an inner fear restrained him. But he could remain seated no longer. He moved nervously about on the chair, and all the enthusiasm for waxing threads had oozed out of him. He was heartily sick of it, and glared angrily at the black cat. "Now that the cat is so peacefully asleep," he thought, "I've got a dandy chance to chop off its tail."

He peered about for the chopping-knife, and discovered it in the corner where he himself had left it after chopping the wood. He arose and took it into his hand. The master, at this juncture, raised his head.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

Mottke, juggling the knife uneasily, made no reply. At the sound of the master's voice his wife awoke. The cat awoke, too, and hastened to lick its fur. Berish and Dobzhe stared inquiringly at the new apprentice. Then suddenly the wife seemed to remind herself of something, went to a bureau, took a few coins from a drawer, and gave them to Mottke, telling him to buy, at the nearby store, some bread and two herrings.

Mottke took the money and left. And already he knew that he would not return. Only he was sorry that he had not chopped off the cat's tail while he was about it. He would see to that, however, some other time.

Once he reached the street the sun kissed him with its warm rays, as if it were glad to see him back. The money scorched his palm, and for sheer joy he broke into running. He soon reached the market-place, and the odor of the apples and fresh pears intoxicated him. Passing by a bakery, and sorely tempted by the ravishing odor of the fresh cakes, he entered, bought a pocketful, and began eating them. At a distance he could see Faygel in the market square, surrounded by her baskets, barrels and fruit bags. He ran over to her and grabbed several pears.

When she spied Mottke, Faygel began to wring her hands in desperation. "What are you doing here at this time of the day?" she cried. "Have you run away from your master? Your father'll kill you!"

Her words suddenly recalled to him the misdeed of which he had been guilty. He had already gulped down half of the cakes he had bought; to return now to Berish was out of the question. Not that he was sorry, even for an instant, for what he had done; but he feared a whipping. He felt instinctively that they would soon be on his trail.

He must hide. Leaving the market-place he turned into a narrow lane. Then, seized with a happy thought he climbed over a fence and found himself in the yard of Notte the hurdy-gurdy man. He crawled on all fours into Burek's kennel, and fell there in a heap.

The dog recognized Mottke, sniffed all over him, and licked his face and hands. The runaway took out the remainder of his cake and shared it equally with the dog.

By this time, Mottke felt sure, they were looking for him high and low. His father, old Berish and Dobzhe were scurrying over the market-place flourishing sticks and straps. But somehow he felt no sorrow at all; nor was he afraid of a beating now. Yet his heart palpitated, and his eyes shone with excitement. He hid behind the dog and kept a close watch on the yard outside. But nobody came after him.

Thus he lay throughout the day. At night he began to feel cold, and nestled closer to Burek, who knew what he wanted. So he warmed the boy with his body and licked him with his warm tongue.

At last, late that night, Zlattke heard a strange scratching at the door of the cellar. She had not slept; she had been waiting for it all night. When she heard the noise outside the door her heart trembled within her, and she crawled cautiously out of bed, listening to make sure that Lib was asleep. That worthy was snoring loudly. So she groped her way to the fireplace. took a pot, brought it on tip-toe to the door, and placed it outside. She then took from a corner an old shawl. which she had already laid aside for the purpose, and passed this through the doorway to Mottke. He lay huddled amongst the baskets and barrels, shivering with the cold. She threw the shawl over him, placed the pot beside him and whispered, "Tomorrow, before daylight, you'd better make your escape. For if they ever catch you here, it'll be the end of you." And she stole back into the cellar, crawling noiselessly back to her place lest she should wake Blind Lib.

CHAPTER VIII

PUNISHMENT AND ESCAPE

IUST about at dawn, in the midst of a refreshing sleep, Mottke was suddenly roused by a sensation of fiery thorns pricking his face, his eyes, his ears and hands. He awoke, and between the blows he could see that his father was leaning over him, in murderous rage, beating him with an old boot. But Mottke did not cry. He tried to hide his face underneath the shawl, but was unsuccessful. His mother stood by, pulling at Lib's coat-tails, attempting to shield her child even at the cost of receiving more than one blow meant for him. Lib beat her off with the boot, and she shrieked with pain. Mottke tried to stand up and throw himself against his father, but to his surprise found that he could scarcely move: he was bound hand and foot. There he lay like a slaughtered lamb, unable to resist Lib, who struck at him as long as his strength held out.

When the boy's face was all stained with blood, and he was so weak that he could not move a muscle, his father pulled him out by the ears and commenced to drag him along over the pavement, now and then

striking him again.

"Back to your master, to your master!" he shouted. But this time Zlattke did not follow them with cake in her hands, as she had done when Mottke was being dragged to school. She was crushed to think that she had raised such a son. She remained at home and wept long over her bitter fate. People on the street, seeing Lib drag Mottke by a rope stopped as long as their affairs permitted and applauded the father. "That's the way . . . That's what you call a conscientious father . . . Teaches his child." . . .

"Lib," warned Aaron-Meyer the water-carrier, "you're going to have lots of trouble from that kid of yours. Better hold him in check. He's growing up like a wild beast. I've never seen the likes of it." And he passed along, his wooden buckets on his shoulder.

"Have no fear," was Lib's retort. "I'll beat the thief out of him. I'll see to it that he grows up into a respectable person." And he continued to beat Mottke. "Along with you, little thief. Come along!"

Mottke made no resistance. He was trampled upon, cuffed and kicked till the blood ran in streams over his face, and the rope cut his wrists and his back.

Over at Berish's the master, the mistress, the assistant Henich Picknick and the three young apprentices were awaiting Mottke's return, ready to welcome him properly. Lib thrust him into the room and dropped him on the floor as if he were a sack of potatoes.

"Reb Berish, here he is. Do with him as you like. You feed him, and you have the right to beat him. Be a father to him, just like me. It was your money he stole, and your bread that he ate. Now you beat him."

"Leave that to me! I'll teach him not to run off from his master and steal money," promised Berish, who, in his wrath at sight of the little delinquent, had grown as red as a ripe beet. Berish bit his upper, cracked lip, and got up on a bench, looking for something on an old, dust-covered shelf.

"And where did you catch him?" asked Berish, taking from the shelf a long strip of pig's hide, which he regularly used for punishing his apprentices. "Dobzhe, let me have some vinegar to moisten this strap; it is cracking, it's so dry." This, very calmly, to his wife, as he bent the hide to test its pliability.

"He had the audacity to come home and sleep just outside the cellar. And my wife got up and gave him a dish of potatoes and bread. They thought I was sleeping, but I heard every move and every word. I just waited till the kid should fall asleep, then I tied him hand and foot like a sheep, and when I had him all bound I gave him the punishment he'd earned. The old woman mixed in, and I let her have some of the same medicine."

"It's all the mother's fault," snarled Dobzhe through her bandaged face. "She spoiled him. And even now she takes his part, lets him in the cellar, and feeds him secretly. How can he grow up into anything else than a thief?" And her words reverberated as if they came from an empty barrel. She spilt some vinegar on her palm and rubbed it over the strip of pig's hide.

Mottke, still bound, lay helpless on the floor, listening to the conversation in which he was the chief factor. The apprentices, with pale, frightened faces, their eyes glistening in anticipation of the spectacle they were about to witness, looked at him with mingled compassion and curiosity. Even the tom-cat came over to him, scrutinizing him like Dobzhe herself, licking him-with its red tongue and returning to its place. But Mottke, in his condition, could not have resisted even the cat. Suddenly he felt as if a knife had cut into his body. It was the strip of hide that was cutting his flesh. This time, however, Mottke did not submit. At the sight of the old Jew whipping him mercilessly with the strap, and the mistress, licking her lips with her tongue — the

black tom-cat at his feet was doing the same - at sight of the frightened apprentices whose glistening eyes stared at him — at sight of all this his strength began to return. With an effort he rolled over and fell into a stack of plates which were piled up in a corner, where they had been left unwashed since yesterday. There was a crash, and the plates were shattered. Dobzhe, startled, began to shriek, and the master's wrath flared up higher than ever. He nodded to his assistant and to the apprentices, who straightway seized Mottke. The apprentices sat on his feet, while the journeyman held his hands. Dobzhe pressed his head to the floor, and Berish fairly ripped the trousers off Mottke. The strip of hide then began to dance like fiery arrows over the poor boy's naked skin. First a blue spot would appear, then the blood would begin to flow.

Suddenly the door was flung open and Zlattke came running in with an outcry. "Murderers, what are you doing to my child?" And she threw herself, full length over her son, protecting him, as so often before, with her own body.

"There you are!" exclaimed the exasperated old Berish. "His own mother teaches him to be what he is! Give me back the rouble that I gave you in advance, and also what the boy ate here, and take him away from me. I'll have none of him."

"My husband hasn't got the strength to teach such a terror," corroborated Dobzhe. "He'll ruin us. He stole my husband's hard-earned money and spent it on himself. And this one comes to take his part, yet. Take him back. I won't dirty myself with other people's filth."

"Zlattke," warned Lib, "Zlattke, keep away or I'll smash your head!"

Zlattke, cowed, moved away from the boy.

"See what you've gone and done? Strangers do you a favor and want to make a man out of your mahmzer, and you come here and spoil it all. Instead of insulting them you ought to thank them. Come on, take home your good-for-nothing."

"My heart bled when I saw how the child was being

whipped," wept Zlattke.

"Reb Berish," continued Lib, "Don't mind her. Do as you please; you may flog him, or kill him. As I say, you're feeding him, you're teaching him a trade, and you can beat him whenever you see fit."

"No, Lib, take him back. I'll have nothing to do with him any more. And give me back that rouble I gave you when we struck the bargain. And the change

that your boy squandered."

"There! You see what you've done, Zlattke!" exploded Lib. "I'll beat both you and the boy black and blue! Beg Reb Berish to take him back, now. Beg for your brat. Beg!"

"I'll spare her the trouble," interrupted Berish.
"Let her keep her goods if she is so particular." He

put back the strap.

"Goods like that I can pick up any time," bleated Dobzhe. "Did you ever hear?"

"There now, you see!" And Lib glared at his wife. Zlattke began to realize her folly. She was ashamed of herself, and didn't know what to do. Finally she fell to beating Mottke on the head with her fists.

"What I suffer through you, you wicked child. Why

weren't you born dead!"

"Now you're talking as a mother should!" exclaimed Lib, wiping his lips, for he had fairly foamed at the mouth with anger.

But Zlattke heard no more. She seized her shawl and ran away.

Mottke's flogging, at the hands of his various executioners, was over. Berish's assistant and the three boys carried him down into the cellar, laid him on the damp ground and boarded the entrance.

For a long time Mottke lay thus on the moist earth, scarcely knowing whether he slept or was awake. He felt pain in every one of his joints, and it seemed to him that his hands and feet were broken, and that he would be crippled for life. As a result of his flogging and the rough handling incidental to that eventful day, the ropes which bound him had become loose, and soon he began to try, in various ways, to work his hands free of the noose. He succeeded, and then rested from the effort. Suddenly the black cat appeared before him. At first it made the round of all the corners, whence issued a screeching of mice which immediately became silent on its approach. Then it came over to Mottke, sniffed all around him and licked him. Mottke scared it off and the cat retreated in amazement. Then, for the first time. Mottke noticed the window. No sooner did he spy it than a plan occurred to him, and gradually the strength necessary to its execution returned. He raised himself quietly, crawled on hands and feet, shoved a sack of potatoes closer to the wall and directly under the window, managed to get on top of the sack and then tried to poke his head through the window. He could get his head through, but could go no further: a wire netting was in the way. He got a hold on it with both hands, raised his body slowly and pressed forward through the small space, unmindful of the pain. He bent all his remaining strength to the task, and when he had succeeded at last in thrusting himself through, he landed head foremost in a gutter.

Once again in the open air, he looked around to make sure that nobody had witnessed his escape, and then selected a large, triangular stone. This done, he crawled on all fours around to Berish's workroom window, and with all the power he commanded hurled the stone through the panes. There was a crash of glass and somebody inside shrieked with fright. But Mottke was already out of sight, securely hidden behind a fence. From there he advanced through a dark passage into a yard. Spying here a loose pile of boards, he hid in a favorable spot.

Soon he heard people running into the yard. He could distinguish his master's voice and the voices of his shopmates. He lay motionless. Once his pursuers were almost on top of him, but they failed to discover the culprit. And there Mottke lay till evening.

Then he commenced to feel cold and hungry. Where could he go? And once again, as in a previous necessity, he called to mind Burek the dog, came cautiously out of hiding, and proceeded through deserted side-streets to the kennel. At last, having made his way thus to Notte's yard, he crawled into the dog's house. Burek licked him and warmed him. Mottke looked around the kennel and found some plates with the dog's food; he tried to eat from them, but spat out whatever he took into his mouth, and finally, weakened, took refuge by the dog's side, receiving warmth and shelter from the animal. And Mottke, knowing that now he was no longer among human beings, fell asleep with a feeling of security.

CHAPTER IX

MOTTKE IN THE SLAUGHTER-HOUSE

BUT at last hunger forced Mottke to leave the kennel where he had taken refuge from human beings. He looked about cautiously, then peered over the fence, to see whether his father or his master were on his track. The place was deserted. The sun shone brightly, and the window panes on the street sent back a dazzling reflection; but not all were as yet awake, as was to be gathered from the closed shutters here and there. Shlaymel the Butcher was coming along, bent under the weight of a side of beef that he was carrying on his shoulder; over the little bridge from the village came Cheyim the Dairyman with his cans of milk. From a bakery store nearby issued an odor of fresh bread.

Mottke stood shivering from the cold, for he had been fairly frozen as he lay there through the night with the dog. He felt faint with hunger, and the odor of the fresh bread tempted him sorely. What with the whiff of butter and milk as the dairyman passed by, and the thoughts inspired by the sight of Shlaymel's meat, he was indeed tantalized. He felt that he must make a dash into the bakery and steal a loaf of bread; but there was the baker himself, standing at the entrance to the shop. Mottke recalled yesterday's beating, too. He shuddered at the recollection, and strolled over to the market place.

It was a Friday morning, one of the market-days just before autumn, when everything in field and orchard

has come to full maturity. The peasants had brought from the villages their best fowl and ripest fruit for sale: fat chickens, their feet tied, flapped their wings on the carts. The square was a chaos of noise that came from the fowl, whose feathers flew about in the air. middle of the market-place sat Zelig the Farmer and his daughter Bashke, near a mound of fresh fish. About Bashke lay scattered all sorts of green vegetables and ripe fruit, purple plums and red raspberries. Her rosy cheeks, nipped by the air of early morning, rivalled the color of the red apples and berries which had been brought to market. Gradually there arrived, one after the other, various vehicles loaded with ducks, geese, chickens and produce, to which were added the butter. eggs and cheese offered by the dairymen. The different articles thus assembled exhaled an odor that permeated the atmosphere. Now came dogs, sniffing at each others' heels and at the carts, for the smell of the food had awakened their appetites. Together with the hungry dogs Mottke roamed from one stand to the other; like them, he, too, had been attracted by the medley of odors. The fear of encountering his father or Berish still clung to him, and every now and then he looked about nervously.

Coming to the fruit-stands he picked from the refuse a few rotten apples and worm-eaten plums, but a taste was enough. He was still shivering from the cold, when the smell of the fresh butter which a peasant woman was removing from a basket reawoke the temptation to steal, until once more he recalled the flogging of yesterday. He turned away. He was becoming restless. To the other odors was soon added that of fresh bolognas and lard which came from a shop near the center of the square. The owner had slaughtered a hog the day

before, and now the intestines were being stuffed. The dogs were first to scent it, and began to assemble at the door of the place, their tongues hanging and their eyes gazing longingly inside. At the entrance stood Scholtz, a fat German in a blood-stained apron, before whom the dogs stopped in awe. Mottke, too, had been attracted by the odor; the sun was shining on the steps, so he sat down and inhaled the smell of the lard. His mouth watered, yet he felt a certain satisfaction. And the dogs looked at him enviously, because he was so near to the meat. . . .

To the market now came robust Jewish women, who added their chatter to the clucking of the hens upon the carts. One grabbed a goose or a duck out of the other's hand in rivalry of purchase; they haggled over prices with the dairymen, while above the heads of all flew chicken feathers. In the midst of all the turmoil the German bologna dealer Scholtz stood calmly aside, while opposite his establishment his compatriot, baker Koenig, looked on phlegmatically. The dogs, with Mottke at their head, had gathered about the bologna store and the baker's. But neither Scholtz nor Koenig paid any attention to the queer company. . . .

Suddenly Mottke spied his mother, at a distance, among the carts. He wanted to run to her, prompted by his longing. But because of the deep impression that yesterday's beating had created, the sight of his mother brought fear to his heart. He took flight and began to run. The dogs ran after him. Soon he came to the street where the synagogue was situated; nearby was the cattle-market. Here were stationed peasants with bulls, cows and heifers, while Jews, looking for bargains, examined the cattle, felt the live-stock here and there,

pressed milk from the udders, tasted it and haggled with the proprietors.

There was a slapping of hands, a shouting, and an exchange of offers. Mottke prowled about, now at the hoofs of a cow, now near a calf. He, too, tried his hand at milking an udder and drinking the milk, and was chased away by a peasant who threatened him with a rope. The noise here, from the hagglers and the cattle, was quite as confused as that from the women and the fowl.

One of the Jews, lame Gedaliah the Butcher, was trying to take away from market a number of calves that he had purchased, and was having trouble. The animals would scatter, and every now and then he would have to run after one that had lost its way among the wagons. Mottke noticed this, and imitating the grown-ups he had watched before, he picked up a twig and helped the limping butcher get the calves together.

"That's the boy. Help me drive them to the slaughter house and I'll give you a nice cake. Do something useful, my boy. Don't run about idle." The butcher, whose watery eyes were red with tears, was deaf, and shouted to whomever he spoke with, believing that the rest of the world was deaf, too.

Mottke liked his latest job. He kept the calves together, twisted the tail of one that refused to move, and at last got them to the slaughter-house. A few of the dogs whose acquaintance he had made at the bologna shop, followed him. He ordered them about, and they helped him drive the animals along.

The slaughter-house opened up a new world to Mottke. Never did the impression here produced fade in after

years. Up to now, when he had seen Gedaliah carry a side of beef, it had never occurred to him that the meat represented what once had been a cow, a calf or a sheep, - the same that he would see in the summer dusk returning through the streets from the pasture. He had never considered the matter, and had looked upon a live cow or calf as something entirely apart. Now he saw it all: Gedaliah drove his cattle into the yard of the slaughter-house, picked out a calf and tied its feet. It lay bleating on the ground, staring about wildly. Then came a little Jew in a blood-stained coat, holding in his hand a long, long knife, the blade of which flashed in the sun. The little man put the knife between his teeth. shaved the calf's throat clean with a razor, then took the knife from his mouth and plunged it into the animal's throat. Blood spurted forth; the calf's eves became glossy, it gurgled — and died. To Mottke it seemed strange that nobody was punished, - neither the little Jew nor Gedaliah. Nobody scolded them for this shedding of blood. They then repeated the same operation with another calf. Looking about through the slaughter-house Mottke beheld more people in bloodstained aprons, long knives in their hands, killing living creatures. There lay a huge ox, bound. A robust chap sat on his head. Mottke could just see the animal's distended eyes. Another man, with an even longer knife, cut the ox's throat. At another end of the slaughterhouse some Gentile boys had tied a pig to a board. They crowded about him, striking him over the head with clubs, while the pig screamed in agony. In another corner a man was holding a knife between his teeth, while a chicken was imprisoned between his knees. The chicken's eyes were already glossy, and the Jew was plucking the feathers from its tender throat. A soft,

bluish skin became visible, over which spread a network of veins. . . .

A cut, a spurt of blood, and another chicken was added to the number of the slaughtered. It would move convulsively on the ground, as if in a fever, blood flowing from it until breath had left its body. And now Mottke saw Gedaliah haul over a slaughtered calf on a pole; he ripped open its belly with a knife, pulled out the entrails, the lungs and liver, and from within issued a steamy heat. As he skinned the animal the blood stained his hands, the knife and his coat - and the eyes of the calf still distended in a glassy stare. Wherever Mottke turned he saw blood, - the blood of slaughtered calves, pigs, chickens. Oxen, apprehensive of their approaching end, bellowed in desperate tones. Calves and sheep were bleating in weak, helpless notes. like little children. The hogs screeched loudly, while the hens and roosters uttered frightened childish noises. Over all of these stood men with knives in their hands. covered with blood, and killing everything in sight, one taking off hides, another plucking feathers from the throats of the fowl. And it seemed to Mottke that not only hens, pigs and cattle, but soon a human being, would be bound and slaughtered before his very eyes. For here everything seemed permissible: beating, slashing, murdering. Never before had he realized that it was allowable to kill. . . .

Excited by the sight and the odor of the blood, he begged Gedaliah to give him the knife so that he, too, might skin a calf. Gedaliah glared at him from his red, watery eyes, his face streaked with gore.

"You don't know the work yet," he said. "You'd cut the hide wrongly. Come, watch me, learn from me, and then you'll know how." Mottke, strongly desirous

of learning, watched his preceptor carefully. He then saw how one young man pulled the lungs out of an ox that had been cut open, and blew through the tube, whereupon the lungs swelled out. And the little Jew who had slaughtered the ox looked the lungs over and felt about for any defects that would render them unsuited for use by Jews. . . .

Mottke assisted in carrying off the lungs and the liver, and his hands, like those of the rest, were stained with blood. Suddenly he felt a blow on the face from behind.

"Who's this new butcher?" was the greeting of a tall young man, known popularly as Nathan the Thief.

"That's Blind Lib's son. Let him alone. The kid's all right. Take my word for it; he's a comer."

"So? Well, run over to Sarah's place and get me a bottle of brandy, and a piece of bread and herring." Nathan handed Mottke the necessary money. "But be back in a minute, — do you hear? If not, I'll break your neck for you."

Mottke made no protest against the blow he had received. Nor did it occur to him this time to run off with the money as he had done with old Berish's. He liked the slaughter-house, and he was anxious to make a good impression upon his new bosses. In an instant he was at the secret ale-house, and when he returned with the half-pint for which he had been sent, he brought an additional half-pint, which he had stolen, so that he might "show off" before Nathan. The latter slapped him on the back in approval of the theft. The bread which Mottke brought was stained with blood from his hands. Nathan took the two bottles and thumped him on the head. "You're made of the proper stuff all right. We'll make a man of you."

Mottke smiled, highly gratified with the praise Nathan

had bestowed. He was ready to do anything for him now, even to commit murder if he were so ordered. And when Nathan offered the bottle to him for a drink, and added a piece of the blood-stained bread, Mottke was the happiest child in all the world.

He picked up from the floor a piece of old milt and threw it to some of the dogs that had followed him. They eyed him with a certain respect, as if they, too, rejoiced to see that he had become a person of consequence.

CHAPTER X

KING OF THE DOGS

FROM this day Mottke became the king of the dogs. Wherever he went a small army of them, like a body-guard, followed him about and protected him against hurt. Regular chums he had none, so that the dogs were his only playmates. And Burek was the chief of them all. Because of the dogs people came to respect Mottke and even fear him. As for the boys of the neighborhood, they were terrified. Mottke had only to beckon to the dogs and it was enough to scatter them all.

At times, when it so pleased him, Mottke would place a dog before the entrance of a Jewish shop, and the animal would be rooted there until his ruler told him to rise. Because of the dog customers were afraid to enter or leave the store; not a purchaser would approach the place, while Mottke looked on like a king and watched the dog obey orders; lying before the store, guarding the place with defiant eyes and growling at all who dared (to come in or leave. The dealers would come pleadingly to Mottke.

"Mottke, take away your dog. Please, why should you do this to me?"

So that at times he would pity the poor proprietress of a shop and beckon to his dog, thus calling off his "embargo." At other times, if he had a grudge against some particular person, he would keep one of his dogs all day long before the door, killing business.

The dogs became a source of power to him. And

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many people began to curry his favor. One merchant even went so far as to offer him money, so that he should set his dogs at the door of a competitor. But Mottke's prime purpose was not to make money through his animals; rather it was to further his personal ambition. And it once came about that Mottke besieged a synagogue full of Chassidim, and kept them all from returning home one Sabbath morning after prayers. All because one Chossid by the name of Eleazer had scolded him and threatened to tell that Mottke stole pears from a Christian's orchard every Sabbath. Mottke released the Chassidim only when at last it pleased him to do so.

The peculiar influence which he wielded over the dogs was obtained not merely as a reward for the bad meat and the milts that he threw to them from the slaughterhouse. No. The bonds of affection between him and them rested on an instinct much deeper than one of purely material relations. The dogs seemed to have felt that in Mottke they had found a two-legged creature endowed by Nature with the wealth of speech, reason and human instincts, and willing to use these endowments in leading them and reigning over them. Before him none such had ever appeared to them. So that Mottke became their king. The dogs recognized this leadership and obeyed him implicitly. He beat them. forced them to stand on their hind legs, to jump over fences. Indeed, it was necessary only for a dog to sniff at Mottke, to learn that he was king of them all.

One of the first uses he made of his power was to avenge himself upon his worst enemies: Dobzhe, his father, and Reb Leibush, the assistant Rabbi.

Towards Berish, his erstwhile master, who had beaten him so mercilessly with the strip of hide, he felt no great animosity. And he knew why — a master and a man is privileged to give a youngster a beating. But as to Berish's wife, — that witch with the bandaged ears, — against her he cherished an inextinguishable hatred. Whenever he met her on the street he would send the dogs after her. They jumped upon her, tore her dress, and as she screamed Mottke would look on and laugh to his heart's content. He gave the poor woman no rest. He would snatch the meat or butter that she happened to be carrying, or smash a basket of eggs. And the black tom-cat had nearly his whole tail snapped off by the dogs, who bled it almost white. Still Mottke was not appeased. He continued to keep the woman a captive in her own home.

Against his father he felt, as yet, too weak, even with the dogs. So he waited for that day when he should be able to avenge himself with his own personal strength. Meanwhile he avoided Lib. But so, on the other hand, did Lib avoid his son ever since he had taken up with the dogs. Lib bothered him no more and let him go his own way. Whenever he saw Mottke on the street with the pack of dogs at his heels, he would look at him out of the corner of his one eye and think to himself that Mottke would some day grow up into a dangerous enemy against whom he must be always on guard. . . .

Mottke's grievance against Reb Leibush, however, rested upon hazy grounds. Reb Leibush was a stern, small Jew, childless and of a stony, grave countenance. Friday afternoons he would take his place in the synagogue, his penknife in hand, ready to decide the food problems which regularly came before him as the Dayon. And whenever a woman would approach him, in doubt as to whether this or that were proper to eat from the standpoint of the Hebrew dietetic laws, he would straightway declare it prohibited — whether it were a chicken,

goose or duck. On the opposite side of the table in the synagogue sat Reb Isaac, another Dayon. Reb Isaac was a tall Jew, who forever was smiling into his beard. And if Reb Leibush had no children, Reb Isaac had a numerous progeny. To sustain the contrast, Reb Isaac declared all geese, chicken or ducks brought to him strictly kosher, proper. But the women never went to him; they flocked about Reb Leibush, and then had to run about town with their proscribed chickens and ducks selling them at half price to the local Gentiles.

The hatred for Reb Leibush had been bred in Mottke since his earliest days. His mother had once been hustling about all week to gather enough money for a Sabbath chicken. Some doubt as to its conformity to the Mosaic law arose, and when Mottke was sent off with it to have it judged he ran to Reb Isaac. But his mother insisted that he take it to Reb Leibush Now Mottke knew from experience that if the decision were left to the latter it would be an adverse one: then his mother would cry because of the expense, and his little sister would carry the chicken off to the fat German, sell it cheap, and they would have to be content with dry bread for the Sabbath. This, then, was the real reason for Mottke's animosity towards Reb Leibush. And now he noticed that the same fellow prohibited everything in the butcher-shop. It was enough for Reb Leibush to appear in the slaughter-house for all the butchers to be depressed with anxiety. A lung and liver are carried to him. Nathan inflates the lung and Reb Leibush scrutinizes it, searches here and there. debates with himself and finally condemns it. His decision lands like a thunderbolt and Nathan murmurs to himself, "I knew beforehand that the old duffer would condemn it."

"No wonder," Red Baruch would say, rolling his bleary eyes. "He's as childless as a stone."

To the contrary, whenever Reb Isaac entered the slaughter-house all were elated. And Mottke knew that ultimately he would be sent over to the ale-house for some whiskey. Mottke would gladly have sicked his dogs upon old Leibush, but he was afraid to hurt the man. Even Nathan the Thief feared Reb Leibush. Behind his back, to be sure, he showered him with curses, but in his presence he trembled. Old Baruch and the other butchers acted similarly, and from them Mottke took his cue. But Leibush's time was bound to come.

Thus Mottke held the town in fear with the aid of his dogs.

CHAPTER XI

"BLIND PEARL"

NE man in particular Mottke looked up to and emulated. This was Nathan the Thief. The latter's work was to skin the slaughtered cattle and hang them out in the butcher shop for the women. his real income was derived from thieving. He lived with his mother in a wooden shanty at the end of the town, hard by Shoemaker's Street. Everybody feared "the shanty." If a theft occurred in town, say a couple of silver candlesticks were snatched from a table on a Friday evening, or if Layzer-Meyer the wooldealer's vard was broken into and goods stolen — the first place the victims came to was "the shanty." Nobody dared enter. You couldn't tell where a dagger-thrust might come from. So the victims would haunt the outside of Nathan's dwelling, wring their hands and moan, trying to peep into the house through a curtained window.

"What's up?" Nathan would ask innocently, coming

to the door.

"Nathan, remember the Lord, and have pity on my wife and little ones. Give me back the skins."

"Skins? Has somebody been stealing skins again? What's this town coming to, anyway? It'll be impossible for decent people to live here before long. Every night some new robbery!" And Nathan would shout indignantly.

"Nathan, please, how much do you want for returning the skins?"

"I want? — I happen to know what the thieves demand, though. They came to me and told me. I think it's — two hundred roubles."

And, finally, after haggling for some time, Nathan points out where the skins have been buried in a meadow near the water.

The town was kept in order by sergeant Ianovitz, or, as the Jews had nicknamed him, "Blind Pearl" this because when properly bribed, he could be as blind as the beggar-woman Pearl who regularly sat with outstretched palms at the entrance to the synagogue. He was blind as a bat, for instance, when a Jew kept his place open and did business on Sundays after twelve: or when a heifer disappeared off a peasant's cart, or a horse was being unbridled in broad daylight and led off by the thieves; nor did he ever see Nathan's gang break into a barn and loot it. He was not only a "blind" Pearl but a deaf one as well, who neither saw nor heard what it did not behoove him to see or hear. He spoke Jewish fluently, and always let the storekeepers know in advance when an inspector was due. "Blind Pearl," indeed, was as indispensable to the Jewish town as, for instance, the Rabbi himself, or a bath-house. Morover, he acted as peacemaker among them. If one Jew informed him that another was making "moonshine" whiskey he would proceed to the accused and tell him so. Whereupon the accused brought in a counter-accusation of theft against the informant, so that in the end the sergeant received graft from both and shut up tight. During his days no Jew ever fell into the clutches of the law or sat in a prison cell. And once, when it happened that Berish, the informant, told the captain that "Blind Pearl" was a grafter, in league with wrong-doers, "Blind Pearl"

came to the house of the Rabbi and he harangued the Jews in Yiddish.

"Such a thing was never heard of! A Jew to betray his own brothers. What! Is there no Rabbi (may he live to be a hundred and twenty) to settle this? If any one bears me a grudge why doesn't he come first to the Rabbi?"

Between Nathan the Thief and "Blind Pearl" a veiled warfare persisted. Like Nathan the Thief, so "Blind Pearl," too, controlled a gang of thieves who brought him their booty, which he afterwards traded back to the owners. The two gangs were strong rivals but between their respective leaders, on the surface, all was peace; they talked, drank together, and made illicit whiskey at Sarah's tavern. But each was afraid to be left alone with the other, lest one should draw a knife and stab the second. It had been tacitly agreed between them that neither should meddle in the other's affairs. For that reason, when a theft occurred in town, and people came running to "Blind Pearl," he hid, and was not to be found at home. . . .

However, each leader terrorized the other's gang. If Nathan, for instance, should come across one of "Blind Pearl's" crowd, he would not let him go until he had given him a black eye. And since Mottke trailed at Nathan's heels, "Blind Pearl" began to keep an eye on him and chase him off from the market-place on market-days. He beat him and pursued him whenever they met. He waited only for a chance to get Mottke into his clutches. But Mottke did not complain to Nathan; in the first place, he knew the tradition of the rival gangs; then again, he was as yet too insignificant for his leader to take his part and get into trouble with "Blind Pearl" on his account.

It was this Nathan the Thief — the man who was notorious enough to hold "Blind Pearl" in fear — that Mottke respected, nay idolized. For him he was ready to go through fire and water. Nathan saw that the boy could be of use some day, so he befriended him, took him home with him, and even let him sleep in his shanty.

Nathan possessed one good quality, at least, for which he was highly praised in town: he took proper care of his mother and held her in high esteem. He had sent his own wife out of the house because she could not agree with her mother-in-law. Nathan bought his mother decent clothes, purchased a front seat for her in the women's section of the synagogue, and brought her the best of fish and meat for the Sabbath. And after the Sabbath meal he would put a new bonnet on her head, dress her in a new jacket and take her for a stroll. And when the women saw what excellent care he took of his mother, they forgave him everything else, and said that this alone was enough to win him a place in heaven. It was even rumored that Nathan's mother — who had in her own day been a butcher and could drain a quart of whiskey at one sitting — still slapped her son's face if he displeased her. And Nathan the Thief, before whom "Blind Pearl" trembled, received the slap without so much as a murmur.

It was this mother — old Peshe, a woman of eighty with cheeks still red — who took Mottke into a corner of her kitchen. Sometimes she even washed a shirt for him, or cooked him some soup. She became his guardian, and scolded Nathan if he dared lay hands upon him. And Nathan, seeing that his mother was so fond of the child, himself grew fond of Mottke and treated him like a younger brother.

One evening, after they had both returned from the slaughter-house and Peshe had set potato-soup and steaming hot meat upon the table, she said, "Nathan, it's getting close to New Year's and The Day of Atonement. And the boy probably can't read even 'Hear, O Israel.'"

"Can you read 'Hear, O Israel?" asked Nathan, absorbed in his steaming bowl.

Mottke giggled, with a hot potato in his mouth. "No."

"Then what are you laughing about? Such grave holidays are approaching, and you don't even know how to hold a prayer-book in your hand," reproached the old woman.

Nathan slapped Mottke square on the cheek. Mottke continued to giggle.

"What are you hitting him for?" objected Peshe. "You're always ready with your blows. Better take a prayer-book and show the boy how to read. You know how; let him learn, too."

And Mottke giggled.

After supper Nathan went to the cupboard, where stood two candlesticks, and took his mother's prayer-book, opened it on a page with large letters and commenced to teach the youngster.

"There. This is an 'h' and this is a b.' Repeat, now: 'h,' b.'"

Mottke laughed louder.

"What do you call this fit of laughter, anyway? Look at him laughing, will you?" And Nathan grabbed Mottke, laid him over his knee and warmed his seat for him.

"Just see how mad he's got!" cried the old woman.
"Let go of him, Nathan, let go of him. You'll kill the

poor child." And she tore Mottke out of her son's hands.

Nathan continued his attempt to teach the child, and fell to beating him again. And again his old mother interceded for the child. "Look at the Rabbi, will you! May your hand be paralyzed. You can beat him well enough, but when it comes to teaching . . ."

And Mottke laughed under Nathan's blows.

Towards Peshe, Mottke felt gratitude and he wanted to repay her. But he was at a loss just how to do it. Sometimes he would bring a chicken home under his coat; at other times he would steal a bottle of whiskey at the ale-house and place it near the chimney for the old woman. But she would drive him out of the house.

"Out of here, you little thief. Away with you and your thievish tricks."

But Mottke noticed that the whiskey would disappear under the pillow of the woman's bed, and he would laugh and run out of the house.

When "Blind Pearl" saw how Mottke was being taken up by Nathan, he began to scheme harder than ever to get the boy into his grip. He meant, indeed, to get revenge upon Nathan through his little protegé. He waited patiently for the opportunity, and presently it came.

CHAPTER XII

IN THE PAWN SHOP

In the town lived many shoemakers that made their living sewing up shoes for the annual fairs of the peasants. All summer long they worked on their shoes, preparing them for the autumn, when the fairs took place. Thither they would travel with stands for the display of their wares. But few among the shoemakers could wait for the happy days when they took their goods to the market. Most of them, indeed, could not hold their boots in stock through the summer, and towards the Fall holidays the boots and shoes would find their way to the pawn-shop of Ephraim, where the makers pawned them for a couple of roubles on which they might live, buy new materials or have money for the holidays.

Ephraim was the shoemakers' usurer. He would loan money at about thirty per cent interest, with a pair of boots as collateral. When autumn came the shoemakers would all beg him: "Reb Ephraim, please let us have the boots for the fair." But he knew that shoemakers are drunkards, and that the boots would land in a saloon on the way to the fair, and since it would not pay him to let them out of pawn they usually remained rotting in his store-room, and never again saw the light of day. For Ephraim never sold them. He did not need the money. He had lived with his wife Toibe the Termagant, for thirty-two years, mainly of quarreling. His day's meal was a piece of old bread

and an onion, and his sole delight was to see his storeroom piled up higher and higher with more and more boots. After the Feast of the Tabernacle season, when rain fell in great abundance, the town had to walk about wretchedly shod and the mud got into the torn shoes of all the populace. And in Ephraim's cellar lay the footwear that the shoemakers had produced for the season, rotting away.

The pawnbroker was in fact such a miser that he grudged his wife the very bread she ate. Every morning his quarrels with his wife woke the neighborhood. And every morning he pulled his wife to the Rabbi for a divorce. "Come to the Rabbi with me this minute!"

And once it had come about that the Rabbi, tired of their endless squabbling, decided to divorce them.

Whereupon Ephraim inquired, "How much will it cost?"

"You'll have to pay for the papers, for the clerical work, for my trouble and all court expenses."

"But how much altogether?"

"In all, including a court separation, clerical work and my fee, about twenty-five roubles."

"Twenty-five roubles!" exclaimed Ephraim. "Toibe, come home! This minute you must come along with me!" And he dragged her out by the sleeve.

And in order to save those twenty-five roubles he lived all his life with his troublesome wife. They hated each other most bitterly, and never tired cursing one another.

It may have been Toibe the Termagant that had made Ephraimsogrouchy. For she did not belieher name. She was childless; you could see that on her face. . . . She looked like a man, except that she lacked a moustache and beard; her face was covered with warts. And

she hated everybody. If she met a child on the street she would kick it out of the way. "Out of my sight!" was her one greeting to every living creature.

Summer evenings she sat outside and breathed with difficulty, for she was asthmatic. Children would come with boots from their fathers; she would snarl something or other, take the boots and throw them in to Ephraim and then to the children, "Out of my sight! Get away!"

And Ephraim, finding his sole delight in his accumulation of shoes, would often lock himself into the storeroom for a day at a time, and reassort the stock which, in some cases, had been rotting for years. Despite the foulness of the leather Ephraim inhaled the odor with genuine pleasure. And he would come out of the room with a beaming countenance. The smile seemed to roll from his eyes down into his beard, the hair of which was covered with dust and particles of leather. Suddenly he would behold his wife sitting there with the face that bespoke her childlessness, and her beady eyes, and his pleasure would ooze out of him. Then he would grunt, utter a curse, snatch his coat and run to the synagogue for the afternoon prayer.

For a time Nathan had been thinking of this storeroom, and one day he sent Mottke into Ephraim's house on some pretext or other, so as to see whether this room had any window, and if so, where it led to.

Mottke came across Toibe, who was sitting before her house breathing in the fresh air of the summer afternoon. She welcomed him with her usual "Out of my sight! Get away!" But Mottke paid little attention to her words, and walked into the house.

"Whom are you looking for?" asked Toibe.

But before she had time to finish her question Mottke was already inside and had discovered the way to the store-room, through whose half open door shone a sunbeam. Mottke opened the door and beheld Ephraim fairly immersed in a flood of boots. He was frightened at the sight of the old man's beard and the eyes that glared from among the old shoes.

"Who's there?" demanded Ephraim, angered that a strange eye should behold him at service in his sanctum

sanctorum.

"My master sent me."

"Who master? What master? Toibe, Toibe, where are you?" And Ephraim emerged all covered with dust, from his beloved boots.

But Mottke was no longer to be seen.

After that day the window of the store-room was made more secure by nailing another board across it, and putting a bar over that. And the door to Ephraim's holy of holies was fortified with two more locks, so that no strange eye might penetrate into the sacred precincts. And poor Mottke was beaten by Nathan the Thief because he had made such a botch of his task.

However, Mottke had discovered that there was a window, and that it faced the rear of Mandrik's house.

And soon came the opportunity to utilize this discovery. For Ephraim, miser though he was, longed to leave behind a memorial. During the past five years he had bargained with a scribe to have a Holy Scroll written in his name, to be presented to the congregation where he prayed daily. Toibe wept bitter tears because she wanted it to be written in her name as well, but Ephraim would have none of her. Whereupon she went to an old stocking where she had secretly saved up some fifteen roubles, and for this sum purchased a cover for the scroll, and ornaments to go with it, which were to be presented in her name.

Up to that day the holy of holies had not been left unguarded for a single moment since their wedding. Whether Ephraim was at home or at the synagogue, Toibe sat guard before the place with her eternal "Out of my sight!" But in order to be at the presentation of the Holy Scroll, Ephraim and his wife for once deserted the sacred store-room. The pious Jews received the new scroll with expressions of deep pleasure and Ephraim and his wife, for the nonce, actually forgot their boots and danced about until late that night with the Holy Scroll, which they called their "child."

Nathan the Thief took advantage of this rare absence by getting around to the window of Ephraim's sanctum and prying the bar across the shutters loose with a crowbar. The rest was easy, and he nodded to Mottke, who made his way through the window like a cat. Once in, he commenced to throw the boots through to Nathan.

After they had filled a couple of sacks Nathan ordered Mottke so to arrange the remaining shoes that they should look as if they had reposed undisturbed. This done, Mottke climbed out and Nathan replaced the bar so that the window looked the same as usual, for he did not want the theft to be discovered before they had paid another visit.

Ephraim and his wife came home after the celebration, and the miser immediately bethought himself of the storeroom.

Woe, woe, he had left it, for the first time since his marriage, unguarded! He looked closely at all the locks on the door, but they were untouched. Cautiously, with palpitating heart, he opened the store-room. God be praised! The boots were still there, and the window looked undisturbed. "Thanks be to the Lord," breathed

Ephraim. "I was afraid. For the room was left unguarded."

"That's our reward for the Holy Scroll," was Toibe's

comment.

"Right you are, my wife."

And for the first time in years, that night husband and wife conversed without curses. They were drunk with the pleasure their "child" had brought them.

And now, through the activities of Mottke and Nathan, the boots at last found their way to the hands of those for whom the shoemakers had at first destined them — the public. Many a good Jew was supplied with fine boots for the autumn holidays, and because boots were suddenly selling very cheap in town, more than one poor man was able to get himself a pair.

But not for long. The boots began to find their way back to Ephraim's, as we shall presently relate. For the guardian of justice, "Blind Pearl," watched like an Argus over the town's welfare. . . .

CHAPTER XIII

"STOP THIEF! STOP THIEF!"

THIEVES! Help! Thieves!" The fearful cry rang through the narrow street one bright morning. Shutters were flung wide open, and through the windows were thrust white night-caps and feather-bedecked beards. "Where's the fire?" all asked, their fright plainly written upon their faces.

When lo, they beheld Ephraim in underwear and nightcap, before his house, tearing his hair and repeating excitedly, "Thieves! Help! I've been robbed. I am

ruined!"

At once there was intense commotion; through the doors came running men half dressed, women in their nightgowns, young fellows with clubs and axes in their hands. "Where? When? Who?"

"He just escaped this way. He climbed over the gate!"

"No, not in that direction. He ran to the lumber yard."

"Yes, I saw him run through the yard."

"Follow me!"

And above all the voices sounded Ephraim's wailing. "He's ruined me, he's ruined me!"

"Who was it?"

"There he goes!" cried a young man, pointing to a low roof, where a form seemed to be hiding behind a chimney.

On the roof opposite the window to Ephraim's store-

room appeared Mottke. The chimney hid him only partially, leaving exposed his cap and his thievish eyes. He was half lying, half standing, a pair of boots in one hand, in utter confusion.

"There! There he is! Look!"

"It's Mottke! Mottke the Vagabond! Mottke the Thief!"

"Blind Lib's boy! I knew right along that he'd grow up into a fine specimen!"

"Surround the place!" cried a voice here and there.

And still Ephraim's wailing continued. Out of corners, yards and alleys came men, women, boys and girls armed with sticks, rolling-pins, brooms and chopping knives, all shouting, "Where is the thief?"

"He's caught! They've got him!"

"Here! Right here!"

Meanwhile Mottke squirmed about on the roof like a trapped mouse. From fright he clutched the boots tighter than ever, and watched the crowd with restless eyes.

"Let's climb up to him!"

"Who'll follow me?"

Here and there stepped forward a brave volunteer.

But Mottke, seeing that the boys were after him, made a dash, disappeared from sight, soon to emerge upon another roof.

"There he is! There he is!"

And before long the whole town, armed with sticks and brooms, was after poor Mottke, who hopped from one roof to another. Suddenly he dived into an opening, raced through a house like a black rat, rushed out to the street and into the carpenter's yard, and soon was buried away in a hiding place afforded by the piles of logs, boards and wooden odds and ends that were heaped

up about the place.

The entire village, armed with whatever they had first laid hands upon, came running after him, saw him disappear into the yard, and dashing after in hot pursuit. At the head of all came Ephraim, in drawers and night cap, tearing his hair in despair.

"Help! Help! The boy has ruined me!"

"Come, Reb Ephraim. Let's take these boards and logs apart," suggested Nachumshe the Shoemaker, who had all his life made shoes only to have them find their way to Ephraim's collection. He was breathing hard, through his shrunken cheeks, from the effort of the chase.

"Wait! Wait! Here comes Blind Pearl!" somebody shouted.

"Make way for Blind Pearl!"

The crowd stepped back. Blind Pearl, in full uniform, armed with a sword and revolver, entered the yard. His red neck overflowed his collar, and his sleepy-looking eyes stared before him in a wrath which was further accentuated by his hair, that seemed to be standing on end.

"What's going on here?" he bellowed, stroking his moustache with his large hand. This meant that he was very angry.

"Oh, he has ruined me, he has ruined me!"

"We'll see about that!" snarled Blind Pearl in Russian, which was another sign that he was exceedingly wroth.

He went over to the woodpile, rapped it with his sword and commanded, in Russian, "Come out, you thief!"

But Mottke remained in hiding, from where he could see the crowd with its weapons and Blind Pearl with the sword. He was not frightened. He looked straight at them and awaited developments.

"What's up?" inquired Nathan the Thief, suddenly

making his appearance in the yard.

The people all looked at one another, and answered with a grin, as if innocent of all knowledge, "How should we know? We saw them all running, so we followed."

"What is it. A thief?" asked Nathan.

"We shall see!" repeated Blind Pearl, beating the boards all the harder with his sword and calling louder than ever for the thief to come forth.

Nathan looked on, expectantly.

Mottke made no reply to the officer's second request. so Blind Pearl turned to the crowd and commanded, "Clear away these boards!"

The work was attacked with a right good will. Most of the men were shoemakers who had pawned their stock with Ephraim. They threw aside one pile after the other, and each time Mottke escaped to another hiding place.

Of a sudden a wild cry resounded in the yard.

"You shan't do it! I won't let you!"

It was Red Zlattke, who had again come to take her son's part. She threw herself full length upon the boards and refused to let the men continue the work of removing the wood.

"Get out of the way this minute!" shouted Blind

Pearl, flourishing his sword.

But Zlattke did not budge, and shrieked in tones that were not those of a human being, "I won't move. You're going to kill him!"

"Folks, take her away," cried Blind Pearl. "I'll get

real mad in a minute!"

The crowd tried to get Zlattke out of the way, but she

kicked and scratched and kept the men and women at bay.

"You won't get near him! You mean to kill him!"
And Nathan, in tense but subdued tones, threatened
the persons who were attempting to move her. "I'll
break your necks for this!"

The Jews remained standing, undecided. They feared Nathan, and likewise, Blind Pearl and did not know whom to obev.

And when Blind Pearl noticed their indecision, he looked maliciously at Nathan, and himself advanced to Zlattke, beating her with the flat of his sword. "Away with you, woman. So you'd bring him up to be a thief, eh!"

This was more than Nathan could stand. He seized Blind Pearl by the lapel and thrust his fist into the officer's face.

"You'd beat a woman, would you? I'll crack your head for you!"

Blind Pearl, frightened, whipped out his revolver and shouted, "Away from here, or I'll shoot you like a dog. Don't dare to interfere with the law!"

It was not Nathan's tactics to start trouble in broad daylight, so he stepped back. Blind Pearl, seeing that he had the upper hand, pointed at Nathan and cried to the crowd, "Bind him. He interfered with the law!"

Nathan stood there, pale but smiling. In his hand he held a crowbar, — his well-known weapon — and not a Jew dared to make a step towards him.

Blind Pearl resumed his chase after Mottke, driving off Zlattke and shouting to the men to remove the boards. But not a hand was offered. Whether because they feared Nathan, or because Blind Pearl had been too harsh in his treatment of Zlattke, the crowd's sympathy

had shifted to Mottke. And the officer of the law unaided, had to lift one heavy plank after another, until the sweat rolled from his fat neck. Red in the face with anger and exertion, he cursed the Jews and their Rabbis, while the surrounding men looked on and grinned. And Blind Pearl worked away until he had displaced a large number of planks and was rapidly making his way to the culprit.

Suddenly Mottke jumped forward into a crowd of men. Nobody offered to impede his way; indeed, some even shielded him with their coats. Whereupon Blind Pearl drew his sword and began to give chase to the escaping urchin. Mottke ran into another yard, jumped a fence, and took his way towards the open fields. Blind Pearl and Ephraim were the only ones that followed him. The men and women, their sticks and brooms in their hands, looked on at the strange sight of Blind Pearl, sword flourishing, puffing after the runaway, closely followed by the pawnbroker in drawers and night-shirt. But nobody stirred. Mottke ran like the wind, and the crowd laughed at Blind Pearl's breathless pursuit.

At last the officer was exhausted. He stopped, sheathed his sword, spat out and gasped, in Yiddish, to a few Jews that were standing nearby, "If you — want a — thief in your — midst, I should worry. It's none of — my affair."

And then noticing at his side the queerly attired Ephraim, still pulling his hair and proclaiming aloud his ruination, Blind Pearl vented his anger upon the pawn-broker. "Help! He's ruined me!" he mimicked "It's all your own fault. Who told you to keep your boots in that room of yours? Return them to the shoemakers and then nobody'll steal 'em from you."

They were interrupted by a commotion at the end of the street whither Mottke had made his way. Several youngsters were running ahead, crying, "He's caught! They've got him!" And soon appeared the Gentile butcher and his son, leading Mottke, a prisoner. They had captured him in their yard, where he had sought refuge. Mottke walked between them, eyes bloodshot, but nevertheless calm. Blind Pearl drew himself to his full height and held his revolver in readiness. The surrounding crowd, awed by the weapon, stepped back, while Mottke's captors delivered him into the hands of Justice, which, in the person of Blind Pearl, took him over with all the dignity of Law and Order and led him off to prison.

CHAPTER XIV

IN THE TOWN LOCK-UP

THE town jail, consisting of a single large cell, was located in the center of the market, and was the best, most sanitary place in the village. The windows looked out into the square, and from within could be seen everything that was going on. From the street, likewise, could be seen much of what was occuring in the lock-up.

Jews were sentenced to prison for various offences: one, for instance, had traded secretly on a Sunday and his name had been taken by Blind Pearl. The judge had decreed that either the law-breaker spend five days in jail, or pay five roubles per day for the five days. The law breaker preferred to save the twenty-five roubles and served his five days. Afterwards, his friends congratulated him, and wished that he earned that amount every week.

But this was all ancient history, when Blind Pearl was yet green to the business, and noted down in his memorandum book every offense that he discovered. In time he became accustomed to the place and entered into an agreement with the populace by which, for his blindness, he received a rouble and a half, a pound of tea and three pounds of sugar every week. The Jewish beadle collected this every Friday afternoon: kopecks from the men and little heaps of sugar from the housewives. Thereafter, if a respectable citizen fell afoul of the government — say the Commissioner came from the

city, inspected the alleys, found them too dirty and imposed a penalty of five days in iail or five roubles per day - it was agreed that Mayshe-Shlavme, the assistant beadle, should serve the sentence instead. Mayshe-Shlavme, as vicarious prisoner did the job at less than five roubles per day: in fact, he received about two gulden (about 15 cents) per diem, nor did he waste his time, at that. For while serving the other fellow's sentence, he prepared himself for the future life, and chanted the Psalms all day long. And Blind Pearl saw to it that the assistant beadle made a living, and had a steady job as substitute for others, for which he was properly thankful to the guardian of the law. He would remain in jail for a week; when Friday came, Blind Pearl knew that a good Jew must be with his wife and family on the Sabbath, so he would release Mayshe-Shlayme just in time for the Sabbath eve services. On Saturday night, when all Jews return to their week-day activities. Mayshe-Shlavme would return to his -- back to the jail.

It happened once that Blind Pearl forgot Mayshe-Shlayme, and brought no charges against inhabitants of the town for whom the assistant beadle could serve sentence as substitute. So Mayshe-Shlayme came to him, complaining. "What? Am I nobody? Don't I need to make a living?"

Blind Pearl knew that the poor fellow had a wife and children to support. So he managed to have some worthy citizen sentenced to five days in jail — not because any crime had been committed, but merely that Mayshe-Shlayme might have somebody to substitute for, and that the jail might not be empty.

Sometimes a resident would protest, and argue it out with Blind Pearl. "What do you mean? This isn't

right. Don't you get a rouble and a half a week? Why have you got after me?"

And Blind Pearl would reply, in Jewish intonation, "There is an honest Jew in this town, whose name is Mayshe-Shlayme, and he needs to make a living."

Among the permanent fixtures of the jail was a dangerous political agitator, Chanatsky, a Polish shoemaker whom the Jews called "the Polish Army."

He was a poor chap who sat all week in Baruch's workshop, bent over his boots and soles. He was tall and thin, and affected a long, Polish moustache. All week long he would be quiet, good-humored, smiling to everyone and giving little tid-bits to the children on the street. But when Sunday came he was suddenly transformed; he would get drunk and come out in the street wearing some sort of torn military cap, a relic of the Napoleonic days, and brandishing a rusty sword, singing the patriotic Polish hymn at the top of his lungs. He would call upon the Polish army, and declaim the names of Poland's heroes. At the sight of this dangerous revolutionist the street would be thrown into a panic. "A revolt!" they all would cry, in Russian. Polish shoemaker will be the death of us vet!" Then Blind Pearl, revolver, sword and all would come to the rescue, lead the "Polish Army" to jail and give him a thrashing as well, so that the Polish Army slept it off during the night and awoke sober.

Mayshe-Shlayme saw the drunken "Polish Army" roll over the floor of the cell, and he would sigh and have compassion upon God's creatures. "The man is crazy," he would moan, "to go to prison without getting paid for it." And then he would scold the drunkard. "How can a fellow be so silly! Oy, Oy, Mr. Polish Army!" And he would shake his head.

The Polish Army would take Mayshe-Shlayme's words to heart, scratch his head and reply, "You're right,

Mayshe-Shlavme, you're right."

Then the Army quieted down, decided not to be so foolish again, and in the morning Blind Pearl would release him. With a black eye the Polish Army would return to Baruch and sit down to work quietly until the next Sunday, when he would get drunk again, once more mobilize his imaginary troops and throw a new scare into the populace with his singing of the forbidden hymn.

It was to these two prisoners that Blind Pearl added a third: the twelve-year-old Mottke, whom he escorted in with sword and gun. On the floor lay the Polish Army snoring loudly; at the window sat Mayshe-Shlavme. his spectacles on his nose and a thick prayer-book before him. Upon beholding the newcomer he groaned, nodded to Mottke and intoned from the Psalms. "'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly. nor standeth in the way of sinners. . . . ' "

Blind Pearl whipped out his revolver and the rusty weapon, which had never contained a bullet, so terrified the prisoners that Mayshe-Shlayme broke into prayer and the hair of the Polish Army stood up, stiff with fright. But it was not at these that the gun was aimed. Blind Pearl poked the revolver into Mottke's face and shouted, "Confess this minute that it was Nathan the Thief who sent you to steal the boots, and that he has them now. This very minute! Confess!"

But the revolver failed to intimidate Mottke. His sparkling eyes blinked, and he looked fearlessly straight at Blind Pearl.

"I'll shoot you!" cried the latter. "Confess, or I'll shoot you!"

"Oy!" groaned Mayshe-Shlayme from his corner.

Blind Pearl glared at him, and the assistant beadle hastened to bury his face in his prayer-book, chanting dejectedly, "Oy! 'For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish.'"

Blind Pearl, seeing that he could not frighten Mottke,

struck him a hard blow.

At this point Mottke remembered that he could cry. And he raised such a hubbub that the whole town came running to the jail windows.

Blind Pearl's anger grew. He threw Mottke on the floor, kicked him and cuffed him wherever he could strike.

But Mottke was not silent. His cries brought the inhabitants of the village together even as the tolling of fire bells. They came running to the scene, and the word passed. "He's beating Mottke in there. He's beating Mottke."

Mottke's cries penetrated even to Zlattke's ears. She rushed to the jail window, wrung her hands and wailed like some wild-beast mother whose little ones were being taken from her.

"Help! He'll murder my child! Help, folks, help!" She tried to reach the window, beat the door with her fists and continued to shriek.

"Folks, have pity! He'll kill my son!"

Her hair fell over her shoulders; her eyes, filled with tears, seemed to bulge out; and she beat the door with her scratched hands and with her head.

"Folks, have pity!"

Mottke heard his mother's voice, and this was a signal for him to cry all the louder. The wailings of mother and son intermingled and seemed to scandalize the bright, sunny day. The men could not endure it, but the first to come to Zlattke's aid were the women. With bare hands they attacked the door of the jail. Then followed the boys with sticks and clubs, leaning against it until it gave way, whereupon they rushed inside.

Mottke lay bleeding upon the floor, and Blind Pearl, sword in hand, and purple with anger, hovered over his victim.

Zlattke, as she had done so many times before, flung herself over her child and shielded him with her own body, while the people tore Blind Pearl away from the boy.

"What's the matter with you? Don't you get a rouble and a half a week from us?"

Blind Pearl, beholding the crowd of Jewish and Polish women that had assembled, and the Jewish men behind them, was scared, and shouted, "He's a thief. He's a thief!"

"Who's a thief? There's no thief among us!"

"You're a thief yourself!" retorted the women. "Just look at that model of virtue, will you!"

"Oh, well, if you people are satisfied to have thieves around, I should worry," answered Blind Pearl, shoving Mottke out of the lockup, and closing the door after him.

"Take him along if you like him so well," he snarled, glaring at Mayshe-Shlayme and the Polish Army, who were trembling all over.

Zlattke wrapped Mottke in her shawl and took him back home to the cellar. As they walked along, Mottke leaning on her arm, she wept. "My wayward child. My poor little child. What will be the end of you?

CHAPTER XV

MOTTKE TAKES HIS MOTHER'S PART

ZLATTKE took her son home and put him to bed. He was badly beaten up, his face swollen and his clothes torn and soiled from the episode in the lockup. His mother undressed him, wiped his face with a moist rag, washed off the blood and laid him down in a heap of pillows and old mattresses, weeping all the time.

"Mottke, my poor boy! How terrible you look. What will it all come to? My poor, poor little son!"

With surly countenance and unintelligible murmurings, Mottke permitted himself to be washed and undressed. But once he had laid down, he was overcome by a feeling such as had never before tormented him. He felt thoroughly ashamed of himself, and would have jumped out of bed and rushed into the street, naked as he was. . . . He even felt ashamed of his mother, and in his throat rose a choking sensation. He rolled himself into a corner and drew an old shawl over his head; thus he lay for some time, when he noticed that his eyes were moist, and that sobs were escaping him.

Mottke's muffled crying came from under the shawl to Zlattke's ears. She felt uneasy. Woe to her! It was the first time that she had heard Mottke cry. . . . And this was such a strange weeping, — not the crying of a child, or the lusty yelling which he was once so wont to indulge in. He seemed to be weeping to himself. It cut her heart; she hastened to where he lay, tried to

remove the shawl from his head and asked, "What's the matter, Mottke? My! How they beat you up!"

Her words irritated Mottke. He refused even to let her remove the shawl, and suddenly began to kick and scratch whatever he could reach: the wall, the bedding, his mother. He sprang out of bed and made a dash for the street. His mother blocked his path.

"What's come over you, Mottke?"

"Nothing! Nothing! Nothing!" shouted her son, in angry repetition, as he hastily attempted to don his pants and coat. "I want to go out. Let me out."

"But where will you go? Stealing again? Fighting again? Tramping all over?" And she stood between him and the door.

"I want to go out, I say! Let me out!"

"Mottke, in God's name, where do you want to go? You're bruised black and blue."

"It's none of your business. I want to go out. That's all."

"My son, why do you want to run away from your mother?"

"I want to go, Ma. Let me go."

"Wait, at least, till I fix your pants. You can't go out with such a big tear in them. People will jeer at you and at your mother, too."

From a chest she drew forth an old pair of trousers that had once belonged to Lib, and began to make it over so that it would fit Mottke. Mottke watched his mother as she bent over her sewing, and again came that queer choking sensation in his throat, and again it was followed by a fit of quiet, restrained weeping. Naked, he sat in a corner of the cellar and sobbed.

His mother made no comment, and continued her sewing.

Mottke cried until his heart felt a bit lighter. His mother thought that he had fallen asleep, and she picked up an old garment and covered him with it.

But Mottke had not fallen asleep. From under the coat he watched his mother sew. He scrutinized her face closely and saw how tired and thin it was. Her nose, long and large, projected from a face prematurely old. And her eyes, once so large and wise, were now wrinkled and shrivelled, like that of an old hen. For somehow or other, Zlattke reminded him of a hen that he had seen slaughtered at the abbatoir between an old Jew's knees. He recalled the hen's glossy eyes, that seemed to be full of supplication; he had wanted to tear the hen out of the slaughterer's grasp, but Nathan the Thief threatened to beat him, so he desisted. There was a look in his mother's eyes of that same mute supplication. He felt like crawling softly over to her. and kissing her eyes, her hands, and her old, tired face. But he was ashamed. . . .

At the close of the day Blind Lib came in from the street. He had already been told of Mottke's adventure in the jail. "Go and save Mottke," his friends had urged mockingly. "Blind Pearl is beating the life out of him." And another had cried, "Look at Mottke flying over the roofs!" Blind Lib had sent them all to the devil and had come home to pour out all his bitterness upon Zlattke's head. For it was she who had borne him such a mahmzer, who was the disgrace of the town. He came upon Zlattke sewing the pants and at once knew what she was doing. With a strange glare in his blind eye, he questioned her.

"Whom are you sewing those pants for?"

"For nobody!"

Blind Lib looked about in the cellar, and in one of the

corners noticed a suspicious bundle, covered with a coat. Again he snarled out a question.

"Who's that lying there in the corner?"

Zlattke, goaded to rebellion, arose excitedly and

replied in firm tones. "Nobody!"

Blind Lib stepped over to investigate for himself, but his wife, rushing to the corner ahead of him, placed herself before Mottke and cried, "I've taken him in just to let him get warm. What do you want of him?"

Her husband flamed up in an instant. All the blood in his body seemed to rush to his face and his blind eve

stared as if it were trying to see.

"What! You've taken the brat into my house! Out with him this second! I'll murder him!"

"You won't touch him. I'll kill myself first," cried Zlattke, barring Lib's approach to the boy. And then she threw herself upon her son, kissed him, hugged him and pressed him to her heart. "My poor, poor, unlucky child. . . ."

Blind Lib stopped short, dazed, not knowing what to do. But Mottke tore himself free from his mother's embrace. He had been awake and had heard everything. He snatched the pants from his mother's hands.

"Let me go! I don't want to stay here."

Hurriedly dressing, he threw his coat on his shoulders and was about to dash out, when he changed his mind. walked over close to his father, raised his fists to Lib's face and threatened him. "If you dare to hit ma, I'll beat you for it!"

"What!" roared Blind Lib. "You little mahmzer. you!" And he looked about for a stick.

But Mottke stood his ground, seized a pot that was standing in a corner and continued, calmly, "I'll split your head with this if you hurt my mother."

Blind Lib turned pale, and stared confusedly at Zlattke, who was plainly frightened.

"Woe is me, what I have lived to see! Mottke, you dare to raise a hand against your father?" she whimpered.

"He may be my father, but I'll kill him if he should ever hurt you," was Mottke's response, and he raised his fists once more to Blind Lib's face. His whole bearing shone with pride and resolution.

Father and mother stared at each other in bewilderment.

CHAPTER XVI

HIS FIRST SPRING.

AND now Mottke felt independent of the world. Gentle summer came to the land, the pastures dried up, grass bedecked them and made a soft carpet upon which to lie. The gardens on the outskirts of the village bloomed with onions, radishes, tomatoes and beets, and potatoes were already growing. Then whom did Mottke need? He lived on the fields by the water, and at night he would steal into Zelig the Gardner's wagon. Zelig was a red-headed fellow, with fiery red beard, who had returned from military service and planted a garden of vegetables just outside the town. His fellow Jews could not understand him. "A Jew to meddle in such things!"

But Mottke lived all summer off the products of Zelig's garden. Zelig was chummy with the soldiers of the nearby barracks, and he would spend most of his evenings with the sergeant of the company that was stationed there — drinking tea. While Zelig would be thus occupied, Mottke would steal into the wagon, cover himself with burlap bags that he found lying about, and sleep for a few hours. At first sign of daybreak he was out of bed, and would take along with him onions, tomatoes, beets and potatoes, and carry them off to a hiding-place down by the water-side. Here he gathered dry twigs, old withered leaves and would start a fire. The smoke rose far over the water — the potatoes baked

and Mottke sat warming himself at the fire, whistling contentedly.

These were the happiest days of Mottke's youth.

On the pasture, under the surveillance of old Matshuk, grazed the cattle of the village. Matshuk was lame, and entrusted his animals to his dog Kudlack, who watched them faithfully. Mottke, of course, knew the dog from earlier times, when they were both younger and Mottke was king of the dogs. So that, through Kudlack, Mottke became the real boss of the cows. If he happened to be thirsty he would drive one of the cows away from the herd to the fields, crawl under her and with his mouth suck the milk from the cow's udder, like a calf. . . . And having drunk his fill, he would come out from under the cow, wipe his milk-stained lips and slap the animal affectionately, as if in thanks for her generosity. . . .

And it seemed as if the cow felt a similar affection for Mottke. For as he lay under her, sucking the milk from her udder, she would not move; she spread her feet apart complacently, and stood gazing vacantly before her, mooing in apparent pleasure that a human child should be at her udders.

Often, when old Matshuk beheld this strange scene from a distance, he would run as fast as his lame foot would allow, to drive Mottke away. But long before Matshuk reached the cow, the youngster would have disappeared. Yet Matshuk was not always hostile to Mottke. Sometimes, indeed, he would even invite the urchin to have a pull at the cow's udders, especially when he came across Mottke's fire and was treated with a savory hot potato. It was a fair exchange: potatoes for milk. . . .

It was from the lame cowherd that Mottke first

learned that the world was a very large place, and that beyond the little town there were many, many other cities, and that the biggest city in all the world was Warsaw, where everybody lived in great mansions, and ate white bread and meat every day. And from him, too, he learned that there lived certain women that could bewitch a man, and that you must beware of them. And he learned many other things, as he basked all day long in the sun, baking potatoes at his camp-fire by the river.

And then something happened which he himself could not understand. Once, as he was lying lazily near the water's edge, gazing at the ripples, he saw a young peasant girl cross the water, bare-legged. She raised her skirt and he beheld her plump, bare legs, which were reflected in the stream. He had more than once seen barefooted peasant girls pass by, and it had never stirred him. For fun, he used to throw stones in the water, so as to splash the water over them. But this time he felt so strange . . . his heart began to beat fast, just like the time when he lay hidden under the pile of boards and Blind Pearl was trying to get at him. He crawled into a position from which he could not be seen by the peasant girl and gaped in pleased astonishment at her bare limbs. He picked up some pebbles and threw them in the water. Not for fun, this time, but so that she should raise her skirts higher. . . . For a moment he thought that he would jump into the water after her. but it was better, after all, to remain in hiding and drink in the rare sight, while his heart palpitated to behold it. . . .

When she had disappeared from view, he stretched himself out on the sand. It was warm from the hot sun, which had beat down upon it since early morn. It

brought a pleasant sensation of warmth to Mottke's body. He undressed, and stretched out again upon the sand so that, with his naked body close to it, he should feel all the heat it could give. The sun shone down upon him and heated him all the more. And suddenly he felt as if a human warmth lay close beside him, warming him just as Burek had done in the days of the kennel, or as his mother had done on winter nights in the cold of the cellar. . . . But his heart beat so fast, and this warmth was so strange. . . . He embraced the sand, and pressed his body against the ground, as if he were embracing Burek, the dog — or somebody

The sun continued to beat down upon his naked body, caressed him; and it seemed to the boy that he had discovered something altogether new, and that from now on he would feel content forever. And yet, somehow or other, in the joy of his new possession he felt that he had lost something forever, and there came over him a lone-someness, a dejection that on their part, too, were something altogether new. He began to pity himself, lick his own hands and kiss his body and caress himself, and would gladly have wept for pleasure. Below him was only the warm sand, above him the glorious sun; and he loved them, and kissed, fondled and licked the ground beneath him.

CHAPTER XVII

MOTTKE AVENGES HIMSELF

To the water, at whose edge Mottke camped, there used to come women from the town on hot afternoons, to bathe. He used to lie in hiding, waiting for them to appear. He would wait until he saw them, from a distance, undressing, and then he would suddenly put in an appearance among them and cause a panic. "A man! A man!" Some would rush into the water with their chemises on, and dive under; others would fall, naked, upon the grass, and attempt to cover themselves with their hands. . . . And from all would come cries as if they were being led to the slaughter. And Mottke would stand there and laugh, laugh away. . . .

However, he did not always get off so easily. If, for instance, there happened to be among the bathers Peshe the Butcher-woman, she would not be intimidated by Mottke's appearance. She would rush from the water, grab Mottke by one of his legs and pull him in, clothes and all. And the women would gather round, slap him, pinch him, duck him under the water and fairly choke the life out of him. The youngster would gurgle, sneeze, and gasp for breath; his nose, his throat, his ears would fill with water, and when finally he escaped them, he would be more dead than alive. As a result, he avoided the river when the butcher-woman was among the bathers.

One summer afternoon when the sun was at its height, Mottke lay dozing upon the sand, watching, as was his

wont, the rippling of the water. A gentle breeze blew over the stillness of the surface, and from time to time came the noise of a splash, followed by laughter. He looked about and not far off he saw two young girls undressing before going in for a bath. They surely had not noticed him, for one of them had already removed her chemise. The wind blew it about as she held it in her hand, and loosened her hair: her white shoulder. with the sun upon it, seemed to be illumined with a bright light. Mottke's heart palpitated. He felt himself grow pale, and his feet trembled beneath him. He lay motionless on the grass, held in his breath lest he be discovered, and looked at the girls. The naked one was Channele, the very girl to whom his mother's milk had been sold, — the granddaughter of the woman from Zhachlin. She was of the same age as he. The other girl sat on the grass pulling off her stockings. Her arms were bare. Channele hopped laughingly into the stream, dipped her foot slowly into the water and jumped back with a little scream.

"Ooh, it's cold!"

"Jump in all at once, that's the only way," counselled her chum, undressing hurriedly. "Just see me do it!"

"Let's see, then. But I warn you, it's cold," said Channele, and stretched out her foot once more. A shudder like a breath, passed over her skin.

Mottke watched every move of the girl, and his heart beat fast within him. He felt a certain kinship to the girl. Whether it was because he had often seen her in the cellar where he had been born, or because they had sucked the same milk — the seductive light of her skin seemed very familiar to him. He felt that there would be nothing out of the way in it for him to approach her,

embrace her, caress her body. Nobody would harm him for it. Was it not his? . . .

But he did not stir.

"Now I'll show you how!" And the other girl jumped into the water. A white, luminous body flashed in the sun, the water splashed and there was a sound of girlish laughter.

Mottke suppressed a cry that came to his lips.

Two pairs of lithe limbs splashed about in the water. The voices of the girls rang out in glee, like silver bells.

Mottke undressed noiselessly and leaped like a frog into the stream.

The girls shrieked as if a volcano had opened at their very feet.

Upon seeing that it was Mottke, Channele seemed to regain her composure.

"Mottke!" both girls exclaimed at once, grasping each other by the hand and ducking under the water. Only their faces, upon which was written fright, projected above. The wind blew their hair about.

After the first terror had subsided, the girls stared at each other. Their hearts were still beating fast from the scare, but their eyes sparkled and they felt like laughing. They were embarrassed, nevertheless, and hid their faces in their hands, giggling softly.

"Give me your hands and we'll splash about together," offered Mottke, laughing till his white teeth shone in the sun. He stood naked in the water, up to his knees, and his powerful, youthful body looked like a bronze statue.

"We won't. You're a boy," replied Channele's chum, while Channele continued to giggle through her fingers.

"What of it?" asked Mottke, biting his tongue, and beginning to feel a bit ashamed.

For a moment they remained thus: the girls mostly hidden by the water, and he standing before them, naked. All was quiet. The sun poured down over field and stream. The flies buzzed and chased each other through the air. From afar came the mooing of a cow, calling her calf. Not a human being was in sight. The fields, the river, and all the earth had surrendered to the heat of the sun, which seemed to melt them into one.

Mottke dived into the water and came up between the two girls.

The girls trembled with fright, but were afraid to shout; they clung to one another and looked into each other's eyes, as if to read there what would happen next.

Mottke gazed bashfully at the girls and edged up against Channele.

She shuddered and ran off through the water.

Mottke stared at the girl who had remained in her place, and suddenly jumped upon Channele, embracing her.

"Mamma!" she cried.

Mottke, frightened at her outcry, released her and ran off towards the river bank.

"Channele, don't shout. People will come running from town and give us a terrible punishment," cried her chum.

Channele thought it over, and when she remembered what might be the consequences if people came running to the scene, grew frightened at her own exclamation.

As Channele was now near the river's edge, she suddenly grew uncomfortably conscious of her nakedness and sank to the grass, her feet in the water and her hands covering her face.

Mottke, regaining his self-confidence, came over to her, sitting down beside her.

She sat shivering. Her heart beat loudly. Mottke came closer and began to caress her soft, wet body.

The chum in the water watched them from between the fingers that covered her face, and tittered.

Hearing the tittering of her chum, Channele could not suppress a fit of laughter.

Suddenly Mottke threw himself upon her.

She wanted to cry, to call for help, but over her mouth was Mottke's own, and soon she did not even feel like summoning aid. She was afraid, seemingly, and shrunk beneath Mottke, as if she needed his protection. . . .

And her chum in the water splashed about and laughed . . . and laughed . . .

Not long afterwards Mottke might have been seen running across the pasture, his clothes in his hand.

Behind the hill he hastily donned his trousers and shirt. He then plunged into the woods and sought a path where human foot rarely trod. He was running off to a strange city, where, as Matshuk had told him, people dwelt in great mansions and ate white bread every day.

He rushed along the path that took him from the village of his birth. He was now fourteen years old, and had experienced every sensation of life — except murder.





PART II

CHAPTER I

"GEHENNA"

FOR a long time Mottke hastened over the road to the "big city." The sun beat down upon his head and he became hungry and thirsty, but an inner impulse was urging him on. He avoided everybody that he met upon the way, and skulked behind the village huts like a thief, so as not to be seen. Farther and farther he ran, but the great city was not yet in sight, and finally he became so exhausted that he sank down upon a pile of stones in the middle of the road. He was famished, and his mouth was so distressingly dry that he gulped down his saliva. Near the roadside he spied a little stream. Dragging himself over to it he filled his hat with water, which he drank eagerly. To appease his hunger he tried to pick the grains from ears of corn in the nearby fields, but it was not yet ripe and the grains were tasteless.

It now began to grow dark and a sudden fear descended upon Mottke. He looked about. Everything seemed so strange. In the distance he made out a forest that loomed threateningly through the darkness. The woods were not those of his native town, and they, likewise, seemed strange, and somehow struck him as being evil, too. . . . The pastures around him were no less unfriendly, and the lights that twinkled afar from the

village houses shone like the eyes of an enemy. . . . He sat down again upon a stone and told himself that there he would sit, no matter what might happen. As the darkness deepened, he began to feel cold, particularly in the spots where his bare skin showed through his torn trousers. He kissed the naked spots, covered them with his hands and patted them. . . . Then he began to cry aloud. . . . Hearing footsteps in the distance he commenced to cry all the louder, and soon a peasant and his wife, coming by and hearing him, stopped.

"Where do you come from?" they asked.

"From town."

"Why are you crying?"

"I got a beating."

"What for?"

"Because my father and mother died."

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know."

The man whispered something to his wife, and then said to Mottke, "You may come along with us if you wish."

Mottke arose and followed the peasants. From the darkness a hand proffered him a crust of bread and a piece of cheese, which he accepted, crying as he ate.

The trio walked silently in the dark. Far off Mottke saw huge flames arising from a building; the flames leaped upward amidst immense clouds of smoke. He thought it was a fire, and his curiosity was aroused, but noticing that the peasants at his side made nothing of it, he kept silent. Not long after they came to a village. They walked past a row of low wooden houses. Before the doors sat villagers in their shirts, smoking pipes or cigarettes; some were sleeping on the door-steps, others in the laps of their wives. From one place came the

sounds of a harmonica, and from another there curled upward the smoke from the great flames which had attracted Mottke's attention. The wind blew the smoke in the direction of the sleepers and covered them as with a cloud.

"Good evening, Anton, what news from the city?"

"No news, Stephan," replied the man who had befriended Mottke.

"Who's the youngster with you there?"

"Found him on the road, crying. Says his father and mother are dead, and he has no place to go to."

"What are you going to do with him?" asked Stephan, rising and coming over to inspect Mottke.

"Oh, I'll take him into the glass-factory for the night, and let him warm up and have a night's sleep. In the morning, we'll see . . ."

"Thinking of taking him in as a blower? He looks like a strong little chap. He'd make good at blowing glass." Stephan slapped Mottke on the shoulder. "He'll take the place of your own dead son," suggested Stephan.

"I'd take him in," answered the other, "but I'm afraid that the Jewish superintendent will chase him out. I don't think he has a passport. Have you a passport?" he asked, turning to Mottke.

"That's all right," interrupted Stephan. "The kid's one of them. Can't you see he's a Jew? The superintendent wouldn't drive away one of his own kind." Stephan walked back to his house.

"Good night."

"Good night."

And Mottke walked along with the good Samaritan that had picked him up on the road.

The nearer Mottke approached to the large building whence issued the flames and the clouds of smoke the

greater grew his fear of it. About the building all was darkness. Neither the stars nor night itself were visible; they walked in a dense fog of smoke. From time to time the flames leaped into the air, illuminating the smoky fog; at these intervals Mottke could discern solitary figures standing with bare arms, at work upon something or other. Then the flames would die out and once more everything would be engulfed in smoke. He hopped, after Anton, across puddles of lime, asphalt and scattered heaps of rags and glass-powder. Barefoot he stepped upon pieces of broken glass and jagged edges of broken bottles, yet he was not hurt, for his feet had become as hard as the sole of a shoe. . . . Soon he followed Anton into a large room, lighted by flames that darted from the oven.

In the room it was very warm, and the warmth was indeed welcome to Mottke after the cold evening he had spent outside. There were not many people within. A few men, naked to the waist, stood ranged about a large melting pot. From time to time one of them opened a small door in the melting pot and a tongue of fire darted forth as if it would swallow the whole place, people and all. But immediately the door was slammed to. . . . Mottke cowered in a corner of the room, amazed and terrified by what he beheld. Anton had gone over to the men and was now talking to them; before long several of them came over to Mottke. From their naked bodies radiated a heat just like that from an open oven. The men looked Mottke over and then turned to Anton.

[&]quot;Where did you pick him up?" asked one.

[&]quot;On the road. He was sitting and crying."

[&]quot;A thief, for sure," commented one of the workingmen.

"Have you any parents?" asked another.

"They're dead," was Mottke's curt reply.

"Why did you run away from town?"

"They gave me a beating."

"Who?"

"Everybody."

"Got a passport?"

"I haven't."

"Let him sleep here over night," suggested Anton.

"No. The policeman might come around and before we knew it he'd have a case against us."

"But where are you going to send him out in such cold?"

"Let him go back to where he came from."

"I'll hide him," offered one of the stokers. "Come with me, young fellow." And he took Mottke by the hand and led him to a corner.

"Lie down there and don't move."

"Here. Cover him with a sack and sprinkle some glass-powder over it so that the policeman won't notice him," chimed in another of the men.

"I'll give him a bite. Here, I've got some bread left." This from the peasant who, but a moment before, was for driving Mottke out. He took a crust of bread and a slice of bologna and passed it under the sack to Mottke.

A few moments later Mottke was fast asleep.

"That's how some of God's creatures roam about the earth, just like a dog," philosophized the "hard hearted" peasant, as he spatout and went back to the pot.

"We're all the same. If you were fired from this plant, you'd roam about the world yourself, like a mad dog," retorted one.

"And you wanted to drive him out because he was one of 'theirs'," accused another.

"'Ours,' 'theirs,' — all the same devil!" And the subject of their attacks spat into the fire.

Early next morning Mottke was awakened by a long piercing blast from the factory whistle, which sounded for all the world like the shrieking of a wild beast. He looked about and for a moment did not know where he was. All around swarmed people, and the room was so hot that it seemed the very walls would crack. Nearby stood Anton, and for the first time Mottke could have a good look at his benefactor.

Anton was a veritable giant, with a pair of particularly strong, broad arms. He winked to Mottke.

"Lie still there till the superintendent's gone out."

Mottke cast an understanding glance at Anton and hurriedly withdrew under the sack.

"And here's something to eat meanwhile," said Anton, thrusting in some bread and cheese.

The room kept filling with people. From beneath the sack Mottke could observe that the place was very long and broad, and built of wood. In the middle of the room stood a huge, red-hot oven, and from above came a scorching heat. As he looked a troop of boys and girls came into the room; they were naked, except for their drawers, and all gathered about the oven. The doors of the oven were soon opened, and Mottke saw fire streaming from it like water.

Anton beckoned to him and he came over; as he approached he felt certain that he would be burned alive every moment, but when he saw other children even younger than himself, and girls among them, standing so near the oven, he determined to show that he, too, could endure it. So he stood by the oven at Anton's side. Near Anton were two other boys and a

girl, all three younger than Mottke, who looked upon them, as they upon him, with curiosity. Anton opened a door of the oven and the heat became more intense than ever. Poor Mottke was now sure that he could not hold out another minute, yet his shame of the other children kept him rooted to the spot.

From the oven Anton took, on an iron, what looked like a lump of fire. He lifted the iron, blew into it. shaped the lump and then passed the iron to Mottke. showing him how to blow.

"Harder!"

Mottke blew with all his might.

"Harder still!"

Mottke tried to blow harder than before.

"That's it. Now pass it along to him." And Anton pointed to the second boy.

Mottke gave over the iron with the lump of fire upon its end to the other boy, who blew into it and then passed it on to the little girl with the pale cheeks. She also blew into the pipe and by this time the lump of fire had become a large ball. Anton now took it once more and placed it in a mould. A minute later Mottke was astounded to behold that in the mould the lump of fire at which he and the other children had blown was transformed into a large-sized flask.

"Ooh! Ooh! What do you call that?" asked Mottke, gleefully.

"Touch it with your hand," said Anton. Mottke touched it and let out a shriek.

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed the children. "A big fellow like that, and a cry-baby!"

"Why, it isn't hot at all!" exclaimed the nine-year old girl who stood next to Mottke. She took the bottle in her hands and held it for a while.

"See? That's how your hands must become. They must get used to the work. If you want to be a blower in this shop you'll have to be able to handle fire with your bare hands."

"And so I will!" shouted Mottke, ashamed to see the ease with which the little girl held the fiery bottle. He snatched it out of her hands.

The heat scorched his skin, and at the spot where the bottle came flat against his palm he felt a stinging as of needles. His eyes filled with tears and he felt an agonizing pressure within, yet he did not release his grasp, but held the bottle fast in his hand. When at last he let go of it, the bottle stuck to his fingers and when it was removed some of his skin came off with it.

The boy did not cry. He turned pale and his eyes were flooded with tears.

"You're all right. You'll make a good blower. You've had your baptism of fire. Whoever wants to be a blower must first taste fire." And Anton slapped Mottke approvingly upon the shoulder.

Once more the teacher pulled a lump of fire out of the oven and transferred it to Mottke, who was to blow into the iron tube again. His hand was scorched; he could not grasp the iron; each time he made a fresh attempt his hand stuck to the iron, which carried with it another piece of skin. Mottke bit his tongue with pain, but uttered not a sound. From the oven came a consuming heat; his head was on fire and his throat horribly dry. He had stripped off almost every piece of clothing he wore, and was now as naked as the other children. He saw them pouring quarts of water into their throats from a pail that stood nearby, and he followed suit. But the heat evaporated the

almost immediately, and from the bare sweating bodies arose little clouds of steam.

"Let's see who can drink the most water, he or I!" And the little girl pointed to her pail. "See! I haven't any more left, and he's got half a pail yet."

This was the second time that the girl had shamed Mottke. He gulped down the remaining water.

"And just look what a big belly I've got from the water," boasted the girl, patting her abdomen. "Just look, will you?"

"I, too," cried another boy, thrusting out his belly, which was steaming like a chimney.

But Mottke had no belly to boast of; he hadn't drunk enough water.

"Come, children! Blow! Blow! You'll have plenty of time to show off bellies later on," interrupted Anton.

Mottke had already tired of this playing with fire. He recalled the fields on which he had lived in his home town: the water in which he used to bathe: the cow from whose udders he had sucked milk, the gardens from which he had stolen vegetables, the bright sun that had warmed him. And he compared all these to the blazing oven that exhaled such a terrible heat, to the semidarkness of the room, to the sweat that rose from the bodies, and he could not for the life of him understand why people should engage in such work, - why men and their children should stand before scorching ovens. blow into fire and roast alive. Outside the sun was shining and the day was so bright. Then why didn't the men all go down to the water's edge and pitch camp there, just like he used to do? It dawned upon him that he had fallen into bad hands, - amidst people who were torturing themselves and others at a blazing oven. He must run away, escape to some field near the city and live as he had lived before.

But meanwhile he kept diligently at work, partly because of his shame before the girl who blew harder than he could and drank so much more water. Anton was satisfied with him and decided to retain him as a helper and to teach him the trade. The superintendent, a short Jew in a small derby, who ran about the place like a mouse, at last noticed the newcomer, and came to Anton for information.

"Who's this?"

"A boy from town," replied Anton. "His father gave him to me as apprentice. He boards with me, and I'm teaching him the trade."

"Has he a passport?"

"What? He's a mere child yet. He doesn't need a passport."

"Everybody must have a passport. You know what the police are. In a factory every worker must have a passport. And whoever expects to work here must have one, too," answered the Jew, positively.

"I'll be responsible for him. I'll register him," assured Anton, meaning that he would come to an agreement with the policeman.

The clock struck twelve; the factory whistle shrieked and the workers began to assemble in the yard. Here the women were already waiting for their husbands, sweethearts and children, with lunches, and each family gathered into its own corner and had dinner. Mottke joined Anton's family. The wife had brought a spoon for him, and Anton invited him to the family pot together with his own children, saying to his wife, "Do you know, this youngster will make a good blower, and before long

he'll be as great a help to me as our Yashi was, may his soul rest in peace."

The reference was to his oldest son, who, like most of the children who work in the glass factories, had died of consumption.

While the other youngsters were showing their distended bellies to their mother, boasting of the many pails of water they had drunk, Mottke gazed with yearning toward the woods not far off. He blew upon his burned hands, and considered how he might escape from the hell into which he had fallen.

CHAPTER II

MOTTKE ESCAPES

TWILIGHT. The peasants sat before their doorways, resting from the enervating heat in which they had worked all day at the factory. The older ones were completely exhausted, and lay like logs, gazing into space with eyes whose light had died out. The children, however, despite their day in the glass-works, were sustained by their youthful vitality. The spirit of play, and even of occasional laughter, was yet alive within them, and their joyful voices enlivened the dark, sooty huts, that stood like so many sinister, monotonous tombs for living corpses. Their laughter shone like a sunbeam into the narrow street, and brought a satisfied expression to the tired faces of their parents, who sat wearily about.

Mottke walked aimlessly around among the Gentile toilers, down the street where the laborers dwelt, and felt like a stranger. He was equally ill at ease among the children or the older folks. The happy-go-lucky journeymen and the older fellows drank beer and flirted with the girls, but they would not admit Mottke into their number, for, although he was dressed in a new suit which Anton had bought for him on trust at the Jewish store, he was only a "foundling." And as older blowers, it was beneath their dignity to play with children. So that, from the first minute he arrived, he led a lonesome life at the factory. He was at a loss to understand it. For at first the place, with its flames and its new faces

had interested him immensely, and he looked upon the work as play. But when he thought that every day was merely a repetition of the day before, and that all they must do was blow, blow, blow, it all became so tedious and tiresome that he made up his mind to run off. But the opportunity, thus far, was lacking, and moreover, he was restrained by a strange feeling.

Anton had a little daughter of some eight or nine years, perhaps more,—a cripple, unable to walk at all. To be sure she had legs, but they were more like broken reeds than anything else, and all she could do was to sit about, doing nothing. Everybody used to scold her; she would sit in one place for days at a time, since she lacked the strength to move herself and everybody else was too busy to attend to her. She was always in somebody's way, and one or another was forever stepping upon her and scolding her into the bargain, as if she were to blame. The poor child smiled into everybody's face as if to excuse herself. And it was this little cripple that kept Mottke from running away.

It had happened in this wise. The second night after Anton had adopted Mottke as blower, he took the youngster home to sleep. When it came to going to bed, however, there was no place for the new boarder, nor was there anything to serve as a cover for him, so Anton's wife told him to lie down near the cripple, who slept in a corner all by herself. For the other children refused to sleep near her. Mottke looked suspiciously toward the corner, where, like a cat, there lay the helpless heap of bones huddled under a jacket. Finally he lay down in the corner, and looked with fear and a feeling of strangeness at the holy pictures on the wall, which were illumined by red lamps. He planned that after the household had fallen asleep he would make his

escape, and he surveyed the various things in the room so as to see what he could take along with him. Perhaps he could crawl over to Anton's trousers and steal the money out of the pockets. But as he lay considering his plans he felt somebody cuddling closer to him and burying her warm little face in his bosom, like a kitten, and suddenly two thin hands were placed around his neck.

He was frightened. He shook the cripple off and pushed her away in disgust. Then he looked at the child. She had bent her little head, looked at him appealingly, and a smile illumined her features in token of her silent happiness.

"Say, do you know that in a certain place in the woods there's a stream where human beings and spirits go bathing? Do you?" she whispered to him suddenly.

Mottke stuck out his tongue at her derisively, and turned away.

"Look," persisted the little cripple, wakening him, "will you take me to the woods and bathe me in that place?"

He gave her a vicious kick.

She made no outcry, however, nor did she weep, but of a sudden Mottke became aware of a warm body nestling closely to him, — head, feet and all. She fondled him and caressed him like a dog licking its master.

And now Mottke lay perfectly still.

From that night forward he cherished a queer feeling for the cripple.

It hurt him to see her watch with such envy the other children playing about on the street, while she could not move. He would carry her from house to house to her playmates, and this became a regular duty for him, until he was looked upon as her guardian. For this he hated her and would beat her when nobody was looking, or twist her arm, but she would look up at him with her small, weak eyes, and her thin lips would part in a smile, so that he would be seized with repentance. Under these circumstances it was impossible for him to run away from the place, or to go off to the woods, or even mingle with the older workingmen; he simply devoted himself to the cripple and carried her from one place to another.

This one fact kept him from deserting Anton. Often it entered his mind to take the child to the woods, dig a grave and bury her there; then, at last, he would be able to escape from the wretched factory. And he would actually have executed this plan, had he not been ashamed to carry the cripple on his shoulders through the street.

The works conducted a store for its employes, who were paid not in money but with tickets which entitled them to a certain amount of purchases in food and clothing. The Jew who owned the glass-works divided rulership over his working people with his family and relatives, so that an uncle of his controlled the store. This worthy establishment gave the employes eighty kopecks' worth of food for a rouble (100 kopecks). And on Sundays the workers would gather in the store to receive the remainder of their pay and to serve their God — for the store was also their church. The laborers were Catholics and the Russian police did not permit them to have their own Catholic churches. They did not conduct the services in the home of one of their own number for fear that the authorities might discover them, hence they congregated in a Jew's store. For who would suspect a Jew's place of serving as a Catholic church? Upon the sacks of flour they would hang up

a picture of the Holy Mother and pray to her, while to Mottke was delegated the duty of keeping on the look-out for the police captain. If the captain happened to approach, the picture would be straightway hidden, and the people would suddenly busy themselves with weighing flour, buying kerosene and drinking beer. For to drink beer in the store was, in the captain's eyes, less a crime than praying to God.

For his services as watcher Mottke became a favorite among the Gentile workers. In fact, between the Jews in the office and the Gentiles in the factory there already existed, because of him, a veiled warfare. The Jews in the office knew that Mottke was of Jewish parentage, and here was a Jewish child in Gentile hands. . . . The Gentiles, despite their subjection, were nevertheless proud that in their care was a Jewish soul whom they were saving from eternal damnation, and they watched over him with particular solicitude. Thus far neither side had dared to enlist the police captain in its cause; of this Mottke was fully aware, and was not slow to use the deadlock to his advantage. Often he would burst into the store, where the old Jewish lady sat chanting the Psalms, and would frighten her.

"You know, I'm a Jew!"

"Oy," she would moan, "a Jew in a Gentile household, eating forbidden food and praying to idols! Oy!"

"Give me some candy and I won't kiss the cross."

"Woe is me!" she would exclaim. "What I hear!" And she would give Mottke a handful of candy.

"And say your blessing before you eat," she would counsel.

"What? Say a Jewish blessing just for such a little bit? Add two cakes to this candy and I'll make a Jewish blessing before I eat them." And she would haggle over the price of the prayer until finally she purchased from him, for one and a half cakes, a blessing to the Lord of Israel.

And these profits that Mottke derived from the Jewish religion he would share with the cripple.

Despite all, Mottke remained faithful to his Jewish God. No matter how much Anton would threaten him with the strap, no matter how much the Christian boys and girls would jeer at him, Mottke refused to kiss the cross or repeat the prayers to the Holy Mother. Once, when Anton's wife made the sign of the cross over him he ran immediately to the well and washed his face clean of it.

These episodes brought a strange sensation to him, for each time the woman attempted to make the sign of the cross over him he beheld his mother, Red Zlattke, sitting and sewing his trousers, the tears rolling down her cheeks, and himself lying in a corner of the cellar, gazing at her unhappy countenance. . . . When he recalled his mother he felt like scratching the face of the Christian woman.

He was seized with a horrible ennui. This eternal blowing into flames, the glowing oven, the eating of smoked lard, the dingy street on which the workers lived, the holy pictures on Anton's walls! — he wanted to set them all on fire, — the factory and the surrounding houses, with their holy pictures, and the Jewish lady in the store, — wanted to set them all on fire and then run away. This, too, he would have done, were it not for the fact that the cripple stood in the way. The first thing he would do in the evening when he came from the glass-works was to lift up the cripple from the place where she had been sitting all day long and sit her down outside to watch the romping children. Then

he would run over to the store and buy some candy and cake with a Jewish blessing, sharing his purchase with his helpless charge. Then he would tire of her and commence to kick her and beat her, and she would raise her eyes to his and smile through her thin lips.

Thus it finally came about that while the Jews and the Gentiles of the place were drawing up their forces for a battle over Mottke, the object of all their prepar-

ations suddenly disappeared.

This happened in the following manner: One evening, after the toilers had returned from the factory exhausted as usual, there appeared on the road that led by the workers' street a long, high wagon-booth with windows and a chimney just like a house. It was drawn by two beasts which seemed to be neither horse nor ass. Behind the wagon came a small donkey, a dog and a she-goat, all tied to the rear. Out of the windows looked a young girl, while behind the entire procession walked a tall fellow with a whip in his hand. From within came the twittering of a bird. When the children of the street beheld the wagon and its troupe they raised such a gleeful outcry that they awoke the echoes, and they ran after the novelty. Mottke, too, felt a similar gladness and joined the children. As he ran he heard someone call his name after him (or was it merely imagination?). He looked around and saw the cripple, who had been left sitting all alone in the middle of the street. Without much thought, he caught her up on his shoulders and ran far into the woods after the wagon. The other children, who had by this time turned back, called out to him.

"Mottke, Mottke. Better go back. It's getting dark."

But Mottke had no thought of returning. He trotted

after the wagon, on his shoulder the cripple, who held her hands tightly around his neck. He knew that his days as a blower were at an end. He knew, moreover, that he would continue to follow the wagon with its animals and its parrots. Wherever they would stop, there would he stop; wherever they would go, there, too, would he go. But what was he to do with the cripple? Go back to the village with her? Impossible! For he might lose track of the hurdy-gurdy people. He took the little girl off his shoulders, placed her upon the ground and ran off. Yet more than once he had to return. There she sat, squatting on her broken legs, gazing at him; but this time her eyes were much larger than usual, illumined with the light of fear. The larger her eyes became the more angry he grew. He would give her a good thrashing and be off. Then it would seem that she was calling his name piteously, and he would return and clutch her thin throat; she would utter no sound, however, but smile in her peculiar way, and he would release her. He thought of setting fire to the whole forest and the cripple, too, but he had nothing with which to start the fire. And here was the wagon rolling farther and farther away. He gave the little girl a vicious slap, and shouting, "Cry! Cry, for all I care!" ran off, following the sound of the wagon's wheels.

But the cripple refused to cry. It grew darker and darker, and it seemed to Mottke that out of the night peered the two distended eyes of the cripple, straight at him, following him. He even felt their gaze upon his shoulder.

CHAPTER III

THE HURDY-GURDY TROUPE

THE wagon rolled along and Mottke kept running after it like a dog, not knowing whither it would take him. The young man with the ring in his ear who walked alongside the wagon, had already noticed him, and asked what he wanted, but Mottke made no reply. He stopped whenever the wagon halted, and ran after it as soon as it was again upon its way. Late in the evening the hurdy-gurdy troupe came to a rest on a field near a forest, not far from a village. The tall young man unhitched the animals, tied them to the wheels of the wagon and let them graze, while he began to gather twigs with which to start a fire. Suddenly Mottke crept up to the fire with an armful of dry twigs that he, too, had gathered in the woods, and he threw them on the blaze. The young man accosted him.

"Who are you?"

"I don't know."

"How's that?"

"I haven't any father and I haven't any mother."

"Where do you come from?"

"I was running after the wagon."

"And where were you before that?"

"Over at the glass-works with the Gentiles. They wanted to make a Christian out of me and beat me, to make me kiss the cross, and I wouldn't, so I ran away. While I was walking I saw you — and I followed you."

"And what are you going to do here?"

"Take me along with you. I can help drive the horses and I'll do whatever you order me to, — I can do it, too. Take me with you."

Mottke spoke in such a tone, with such a beseeching expression upon his face, that the young man took a burning twig from the fire and brought it close to Mottke's face so that he might see what the youngster looked like.

"Hey, Old Terach," he hollered into the wagon, "crawl out of there, will you, and have a look."

Through the little windows of the wagon, which were illumined by the dim light of a kerosene lamp within, there suddenly appeared some faces.

"What's the matter?"

"There's a kid out here that wants us to take him along."

"Confound you! You nearly scared the life out of me. I thought for sure that somebody was trying to steal our horses or that a policeman was in sight. Chase him away. Before we know it we'll have a whole village of peasants after us. Some Gentile kid from the town, I'll bet," croaked a voice through one of the windows.

"No, he's one of the bunch, all right."

"What does he want? Bring him over here. Let's have a look at him."

The young man led Mottke through a side door into the wagon. Once inside, Mottke could not speak a syllable. He was amazed at what he beheld.

The wagon was really a long, narrow house, with small curtained apartments. A couple of small kerosene lamps flickered in the corners, and the light which shone from them on the red curtains which hung over the beds gave to the interior a cozy, home-like appear-

ance. In the center was suspended a large cage, inside of which, on a perch, sat a red parrot, which screeched continually, "Old Terach!" - the nickname of the old man, owner of the wagon. Old Terach lay with his boots on, sprawling upon a heap of old mattresses, bed clothing and gypsy blankets. He, too, like the young man, wore a ring in one of his ears, but his was made of gold, and was larger than the other's. His head was large and his hair, all grev, curled into locks: around his head ran a shaven strip, which like a wheel, made a circle about his neck, his temple locks and forehead. A pair of grave, grey eyebrows that looked as if they were powdered, shaded his eyes. His nose, which was flat, broad, and covered here and there with wirv hairs. signalized its presence by a loud snoring that came from him even while awake and like a breeze parted the heavy moustache that hung over his thick lips. He made a gesture with his hand, in which he held his small burned pipe whose stem was half bitten off, and winked his eyes as a sign that Mottke might come over to him.

The young man, whip in hand, took Mottke by the shoulder and placed him before Old Terach.

The latter did not move. He looked Mottke over and growled, "Hey, old witch, bring the lamp here, will you?"

Somebody scraped out of a corner and brought one of the lamps. All Mottke could make out was the long hair of a woman who was already beginning to turn grey, and the tanned skin that showed through a torn red waist.

Old Terach raised the lamp, brought it before Mottke's features, scowled at him and asked, "Who are you?"

Mottke made no reply. He was enchanted by the chirping of canary birds from every corner, and by the

screeching of the parrot. It seemed that he was in another world, and he liked it all so much that he would give his life to remain here forever.

"Who are you?" repeated the old man in a gruff bass.

"I'm an orphan, and I haven't any father and I haven't any mother," repeated Mottke, as on previous occasions, with a voice in which tearful pleading mingled with obstinacy.

"I've heard that already. You're lying. Have you got a 'signature'? Let's see it, then."

Mottke stared at him.

"Have you got a passport? Let's see your passport," interjected the tall young man, interpreting Old Terach's slang.

"I haven't any passport. The Gentiles took it away from me."

"What Gentiles?"

"The ones who nabbed me and tried to make a Christian out of me, and I didn't want to do it, 'cause I'm a Jew, and that's why I ran away from them."

"Whom are you trying to tell all this to? You're a little thief, that's what you are, and you've escaped from prison and the police are after you. Hold him. We'll give him over to the police!"

Mottke was half frightened, but he smiled nevertheless, for he knew that before they ever noticed it he could escape from them as he had from others; nor did the threat intimidate him. And now he caught sight of something which once more took away his breath. From behind one of the curtains appeared a young girl in a red jersey that was pulled down so tight over her lithe, shapely legs that it seemed like a second skin. Over her bare arms and breast fluttered a bluish veil. Her hair was black and long, and fell across her face and

over her shoulder. With one hand she brushed aside her locks from her face and Mottke beheld a pair of dark, youthful, flaming eyes, two red, painted lips and cheeks, and gold rings jingling in her ears. In the other hand she held a mirror; a comb was stuck in her hair and on her shoulder was perched a blue bird with a long, gilded beak. The bird was mumbling something or other. Mottke was so hypnotized by the vision that he forgot completely what Old Terach had threatened, and failed to feel the tall youth clutching him by the shoulder. He gazed at the girl with a smile of enchantment, and he was ready to die at her very feet.

"Well, you'd better confess who you are, and I'll let you go. A thief, aren't you? Escaped from prison, hey? Speak, or I'll hand you over to the police,"

repeated the old man.

"Who is it?" questioned the girl in a sweet voice.

"Some thief that was prowling around, ready to steal our horses," answered the old man.

"I'm not a thief, and I haven't escaped from prison and I'm not afraid of the police, nor of you, either. I'm not afraid of anybody!" exclaimed Mottke, defiantly. And for the first time in his life, he blushed, in embarrassment before the girl with the blue bird.

"What! You're not afraid? And suppose you get a good beating?" asked the old man, laughing.

"I'll strike back. And I can do it, too."

"You'll strike back, will you?" And the tall young man, who was standing behind Mottke, struck him with the butt of the whip on the head.

Mottke whirled about, doubled his fists and was about to throw himself upon his assailant, but by the expression upon the latter's face he knew at once that the blow over the head had initiated him into the wagon's troupe. For they had all taken a liking to the boy.

"May your hand wither for that!" cursed the old woman, whom Old Terach had before addressed as witch, and she slapped the young man. "A poor little orphan, without a father or mother, comes to them, and they hit him. May you suffer sevenfold for what you've done to him. Don't mind them, the good for-nothings," she said soothingly, turning to Mottke. "All they can do is eat. They don't work. I'll take you in! I'll look after you. Don't mind them. Stay here with us."

"It won't hurt him, old witch. It won't do him any harm. If he expects to belong to a hurdy-gurdy troupe he must learn to take a whipping."

"I can take it," boasted Mottke. "It doesn't hurt!"

"Look at the way the witch stands up for him, will you. Never fear, madam, the boy won't want to be your lover."

"To hell with all of you, gluttons. The pot's already cooked; come and eat."

"Hey, kid, come here," called Old Terach. "What's your name, anyway?"

"Mottke."

"We'll call you 'Trickster'. Does that suit you?"

"It does."

"Would you like to join our hurdy-gurdy troupe?"

"Sure!"

"Then pull off my boots."

Mottke hastened to comply, but it took a long time before he succeeded, despite the fact that he pulled with all his might and was anxious to make a good showing before the young girl, who still stood there looking him over. The old man had wrapped his boots in so many old rags that the task was well nigh impossible. But Mottke won a victory, for he pulled the boots off in faster time than that required by the tall young man every evening for the same office. Old Terach winked at the girl, as if to comment favorably on the lad's strength, and with another wink, asked her, "Well, how do you like our new guest?"

"I like him better than you two put together, you old chicken thieves," retorted the girl, and disappeared behind the curtain.

CHAPTER IV

MOTTKE BECOMES AN ACROBAT

A T dawn of the next day the troupe resumed its travelling. Mottke, who had spent the night outside the wagon with the horses, looked at Old Terach with anxious entreaty in his eyes, mutely begging, like a dog, that he be taken along. The old man, dressed in "full uniform," his stout whip in his hand, pipe in mouth and on his head a hurdy-gurdy-man's cap, with its shining peak, cracked his whip and shouted to Mottke, "Hey there, mahmzer, gather up the hay that the animals have scattered about and throw it on top of the wagon."

Mottke was only waiting to be told to do something, and at once set about diligently to gather the hay and place it on the vehicle. The tall young man, whom Old Terach called "Kanarik" which we, too, shall henceforth call him was hitching the horses to the wagon.

"Hey, mahmzer, harness the red horse. What are you standing there for, with arms crossed?" And a blow from a whip cut Mottke across the shoulders.

Never was Mottke happier to receive a blow than now. For it came from Old Terach himself, and Mottke felt like kissing the old man's hand for it. He hurried to the "red horse."

The animals were soon hitched to the wagon-booth, at the side of which there soon opened a little shutter,

revealing the girl in the red jacket whom Mottke had seen inside on the previous night.

She held in her hand the blue bird with the gilded beak, and was combing her hair, singing in Russian as she did so:

Thousands have I loved,
Of all the youths I've met,—
Thousands I've forgotten,
Yet one I can't forget.

Mottke was so captivated by the song that he did not know where to turn first, and he could scarcely convince himself that he was really going to be taken along. His protectress, the stout old woman who had on the previous night adopted him, did not appear at the window, but her presence was indicated nevertheless by the smoke that curled from the chimney. . . .

But soon she, too, appeared. She had swathed her face in a large kerchief, through which showed her uncombed locks, and she really looked like the witch that the old man called her. Her sleeves rolled up, she beckoned to Old Terach and a smile spread over her old, oily, fleshy countenance.

"What? You're driving off without a drink, Old Terach? What shall I prepare for dinner?"

"You've adopted a little wonder, haven't you? Let's see what he can do," he replied, pointing with his whip to Mottke.

"Hey there, guest, let's really see what you can bring us for breakfast from the village," added Kanarik, nodding towards Mottke with his head of red hair, which stuck to his freckled forehead, because of the perspiration, and winking with his eyes that appeared no less red.

"And for dinner and supper, too," volunteered the

old man. "Sneak in behind the village huts We'll wait for you on the other side of the woods."

Eagerly Mottke ran off towards the village to forage for breakfast, dinner and supper. One thought alone troubled him: perhaps the wagon would go off without him; maybe, indeed, this was a trick to get rid of him! He looked with entreaty at the "old witch," mutely begging that she be his advocate in his absence and wait for his return. He was afraid to look at the window where the young girl was sitting. Surrendering himself into God's grace he turned towards the village.

Come what might, he was determined to exhibit his prowess before the troupe, - to show what Mottke could do. Like a cat he prowled behind the village houses, and while the women and the children of the neighborhood left their homes to watch the hurdy-gurdy wagon pass through the village with its noise and jingle, he would sneak into the yards. Into a sack he thrust chickens and ducks, choking them so as to prevent a tell-tale cackle; he was on the lookout for goslings especially, and no sooner did he catch one than he grasped it by the neck and into the sack it went. After the bag had been filled so well that its weight began to feel heavy even for him, Mottke crawled through swamps, over fences and behind bushes, so as to evade discovery. And there was the wagon, at last, really waiting for him on the road! Joyfully he ran over to it and poured out of the bag the result of his morning's work.

The "old witch" danced for joy and jeered at Kanarik. "Well, now. Could you do this, hey? You're only good for eating things, that's all. But when it comes to real work like this, where are you, you big bellies?"

Old Terach refrained from comment, lest the youngster form too high an opinion of himself, but it seemed, from his glances, that somewhere, deep in his thick moustache he was thinking,—planning a career for the boy. Kanarik beckoned Mottke to hop on the wagon,

and they drove on.

The booth rolled along the road, bells continually jingling, and at each village folks ran out of their houses to see the wonderful sight. Mottke was as happy as could be; now he really was one of them. And as they drove along he could hear the girl singing:

Thousands have I loved,
Of all the youths I've met,—
Thousands I've forgotten,
Yet one I can't forget.

He pictured to himself that "one." Who could he be, that she could not forget him? Surely none other than some cavalry officer, who rode a magnificent steed and wore boots with spurs. And Mottke was jealous of that "one." He pictured him sitting, perhaps, in a saloon, drinking beer, wholly oblivious to the fact that she, his sweetheart, was sitting at the window, singing this sad song to him.

The old man was reclining in his favorite manner, sprawled over the gypsy blankets, chewing his pipe and listening to the singing. The "old witch" was busy about the stove, roasting the chickens and goslings that Mottke had purloined. Red Kanarik had fallen asleep, so Mottke took over the reins and drove the wagon.

Shortly after noon they came to a stop behind a hamlet, near a little stream; they unharnessed the horses, let them out to pasture, and themselves had dinner. As yet they had not permitted Mottke to come inside, but the old woman handed him out a piece of bread and a slice of chicken, which he ate with keen relish.

After the meal Mottke was given his first "try-out." First of all the old man ordered him to stand on his head. Mottke complied forthwith, but he could not retain that position for long; the blood rushed to his face and his feet grew exceedingly weak, so that they began to drop. But on one side of him stood Old Terach and on the other Red Kanarik, and every time he wavered they lashed him with their whips. It was not for this reason alone, however, that he held out and did his best to keep his feet in the air. For with his head down upon the ground he could see the girl at the window, who was watching his initiation into acrobatics and laughing each time he was struck by the whip. He determined to show her that he was equal to all these tricks and stood on his head so long that his face grew purple. everything seemed to turn before him, and his shoulders were on the point of giving way completely. And thus he stood until Old Terach had finished counting a hundred.

The second lesson consisted in Mottke's learning to do a trick upon the horse they called the "red beast." For whoever belongs to a hurdy-gurdy troupe must know how to do stunts and earn his bread and butter by what is known, in hurdy-gurdy slang, as "working." Even the horses themselves had not only to pull the wagon along, but also to perform in public as trained animals. The "red beast," for instance, could sneeze (excuse the comparison) like a human being. And if Old Terach would pull him by the tail, he could move his ears, — a feat which never failed to please his audiences. It was now planned to have Mottke do tricks upon horseback, — to dress him like a clown, make him stand on his head on the horse's back, while the horse, dressed fantastically, would shake his ears and sneeze.

The "red beast" was of notable pedigree. Old Terach had taken him from an old circus master in exchange for two little dogs that could walk a wire. Once upon a time the "red beast" had been adorned with a ribbon in his tail, with bows on his ears, and a bell at his neck, and on his back there used to come riding into the ring the world-famous horse-danseuse, Savina, the Spanish circus queen. Then he himself had borne the proud title "Nero." Now, in his old age, he had fallen into the hands of Old Terach, who had crowned him with his Jewish appelation — "red beast" — because of two colored spots upon his belly.

And thus he stood now, aged, forsaken, and permitted himself to be garbed in circus fashion, with a woman's red kaftan drawn over his fore legs, while a youngster stood head downward on his back; and added to all this

he must wiggle his ears and sneeze. . . .

Mottke's chief lesson, however, was in wrestling with Kanarik in the Spanish manner. Mottke was to down Kanarik, — that is, Kanarik was to allow himself to be downed, for it would look better and rouse more profitable sympathy to have the under-dog come out victorious. And thus Mottke became the world-renowned Spanish champion, "Severin Serverus," and was to display upon his breast a number of medals that he was supposed to have been awarded at "Constantinople."

To increase the illusion, Mottke had his skin greased with some sort of hog-fat, and his hands and feet were tied fast with towels, so that they should swell up and give the appearance of possessing powerful muscles.

The towels cut him sorely, but he bore his suffering with pleasure, for it was all in the good cause of learning to be an acrobat. In the little window of the booth the girl with the golden locks still sat, combing her hair and repeating the sad-sweet song:

Thousands have I loved,
Of all the youths I've met,—
Thousands I've forgotten,
Yet one I can't forget.

And Mottke continued to wonder, who and where could be that fortunate "one" whom she could not forget?

CHAPTER V

MOTTKE BECOMES THE "WORLD-RENOWNED SPANISH CHAMPION"

A LONG time passed. Mottke lived with the troupe and underwent all manner of torture in his apprenticeship to the art of acrobatics. Old Terach had literally whipped the youngster into athletic skill until he was ready to perform in public with the others.

Ever since early morning the market place had seethed with people. From the neighboring villages came peasants riding on their carts, behind their bony nags, and the land-owners in their coaches - all intent upon beholding the great marvel of a tight-rope walker dancing on a wire. All roads seemed to lead to the town of K-, where the troupe had pitched their tent. A wire was being stretched across the market-place from the butcher's house to the church, and a stage nailed together on the square. Upon this were to wrestle the noted strong man, Kanarik and the young Spanish champion Serverus, erstwhile Mottke the Vagabond. Meanwhile Mottke since morning had been walking about in a queer pair of trousers that reached from his neck to his knees, with a clock painted upon the seat. And each time he turned his back to the audience and showed what time it was there was an explosion of laughter. . . . Kanarik, too, was dressed in similar fashion, and had moreover streaked his face with sooty marks; with his red hair sticking to his eyebrows he looked like a veritable devil. Old Terach

alone was dressed like a genuine acrobat, — in red tricot, arms and legs bare, and across his ample abdomen a band of broad velvet, whereon glittered medals and emblems from all the corners of the earth. These he had purchased from hard-pressed, invalid soldiers, and some of them were so large that they looked like tin platters. Thus dressed, the hurdy-gurdy company was busily occupied in building up the stage and tightening the wires, while about them stood a world of rustics gaping in wonder.

Four o'clock that afternoon, when the sun was beginning to set, the performance started. It opened with Old Terach, Kanarik and the Spaniard pushing into the crowd and plying their whips right and left upon the heads of the worthy audience, thus forming a circle about the stage so that all might have a proper view. The first number was soon exciting great enthusiasm. The artist was none other than the "old witch," Terach's wife. But none could have recognized her now, dressed as she was in a short, red tricot, stuffed in front and back. her face, arms and legs powdered so profusely that it seemed she had just been extracted from a flour-barrel. For the flour she had used for the purpose had spilled all over her red bodice, too. In her hand she held the blue parrot, whose usual cry was limited to "Old Terach." But now, in the hands of the short, stout woman it shrieked, in Russian, "I love you," for which feat the woman kissed its gilded beak. Then she placed the bird on her shoulder and raised a little box to it. The box contained the "fortunes" of the entire worthy audience, and for the price of five kopecks the bird would pick out a blue slip upon which was inscribed in detail the fate of the purchaser down to his very last day: how many times, for instance, he or she would be married.

the size of the dowry or the inheritance he or she would receive, prophecies that the person would not die in his own bed, that a very important letter was on the way and so on. . . .

After the "old witch" came Old Terach, his medals jingling across his belly. In a language which consisted of an equal admixture of Russian, Polish and Yiddish. together with another queer tongue which nobody present could understand, and which sounded like Hungarian or Turkish, (although it was the regular hurdy-gurdythieves' cant) he announced that there would soon be introduced to the audience the renowned Spanish Champion who, although not yet twelve years old had achieved world-wide fame through his victories over thousands of dangerous competitors. This juvenile champion was to wrestle with another world-famous expert of the mat, the Hungarian wonder, Kanarik-Kanarikedo. But before the match the young champion. who was still a child, mind you, would give a special solo exhibition.

Whereupon Old Terach winked to Kanarik, who thrust Mottke forth.

Mottke, stage-struck, trembled to behold the crowd before him, and was completely at a loss. Meanwhile the audience scrutinized him with curiosity. He was dressed in knee-pants, so as to appear all the younger. The "old witch" had combed his hair very carefully, and Mottke's head, which had never before known the luxury of a comb and brush looked, after having been smeared with hog-grease, as smooth and black as a raven's wing. He wore, too, a black velvet jacket which had long been the property of Kanarik. So that he really looked his juvenile part. And thus decked out, he stood there, ashamed, frightened,—and motionless.

Old Terach took him by the hand, and pointing at him, addressed the crowd.

"Do you see this boy? He is a mere child, not yet twelve years old, yet this mere child will lift a hundredpound weight with his teeth! On one arm he will support two persons, and I defy you to produce a stronger person in the entire world. He has already defeated twenty athletes, and received this medal from the King of Spain"—and Old Terach pointed to the tin circle on Mottke's breast. "His father was the world-famous Serverus and his mother weighed half a ton - the fattest woman in the world. From these he inherits his Herculean strength. Just take a look at this arm" and he pointed to Mottke's swollen arm, that had been bandaged tightly for the past few weeks in order that it might swell - "do you see the muscles on it? I'm afraid of him myself!" And Old Terach jumped away in feigned fright, drawing a loud laugh from the gaping crowd.

But despite the breathing-space of the harangue Mottke was still at a loss, still awed by the audience. Yet Old Terach's talk and the crowd's reception of it tempted him to laughter, and he was afraid lest he explode any moment.

"Bow to the audience, you little mahmzer; smile at them, smile, plague take you!" Old Terach hissed between his teeth, while to the crowd it appeared that he was merely caressing the child's glossy black hair. "He's a child yet," Old Terach explained to the people. "His mother entrusted him to my care." Then turning to Mottke, he suddenly began, "Gratana, Gratana, chocolatana?" And to the crowd: "I'm asking him whether he'd like some chocolate. You see, he doesn't understand our language, so I must talk to him in his

mother tongue, — Spanish." Then turning back to Mottke: "Gratana, gratana, chocolatana? Here you are," and the old mountebank thrust a piece of sugar into Mottke's mouth, as if he were feeding a bird, and muttered to him once again.

"Bow, will you, you mahmzer! If you don't smile I'll strike you flat with my whip! Make a bow, I say! Make a bow!"

Mottke could no longer restrain himself. The laughter seemed to be sticking in his throat, ready to burst out at his slightest gesture. Hence his petrified pose, his reluctance to bow, to smile or change position. But he could hold out no longer and exploded into loud laughter.

The crowd echoed the laughter back in thunderous volleys.

The old man, for a moment, was taken aback, when suddenly he hit upon an idea.

"He means that you are to applaud him — like this — to clap with your hands," he explained to the audience. "In Spain, you must understand, when a performer seeks to be applauded, he laughs."

Whereupon the crowd began to applaud, and Old Terach whispered to Mottke, "You'll catch the cholera from me for this later, you little bastard. I'll teach you to laugh. — Very well. Now, lift that hundred-pound weight with your teeth," he continued aloud, in a fatherly tone.

Mottke lifted the weight with his teeth; the old man, by his gestures, impressed its heaviness upon the people in the audience, and they rewarded the youth with loud bravos.

Then out jumped Kanarik, dressed likewise in kneepants and velvet jacket and adorned with medals. He bowed to the audience, shook his head of red hair and shrieked, "Igro! Igro!" which was presumably Hungarian. He managed to whisper an aside to Mottke. "You see, you little mahmzer, how you're supposed to come out before an audience? Hev?"

They both girded their belts and prepared to wrestle.

Old Terach, before the match started, had invited some of the audience to come upon the stage, so as to see that it was managed fairly. But none volunteered at first, ashamed to ascend to such prominence before their neighbors. Two, at last, were brave enough to step forward: Cheimel, the apprentice barber-surgeon, an amateur wrestler and incidentally member of the local fire-brigade, and Kazlovsky, the Polish shoemaker. They took their places upon the stage as judges of the match, and as a result of this occurence were nicknamed by the crowd "our prize performers," — a sobriquet that sticks to them to the present day.

Kanarik seized Mottke in a powerful grip, determined to impress upon him once and for all that although it had been previously agreed to let Mottke win, for the sake of the effect upon the audience, nevertheless he, Kanarik, was the stronger of the two, and could give good account of himself if necessary. But Kanarik soon realized that Mottke would not permit himself to be stretched out as easily as all that. For Mottke, too, was by this time warmed up to his task by the audience, and wanted ever so much to reveal his prowess. Moreover, Mottke knew that by getting the best of Kanarik he would gain favor in Old Terach's eyes, and would command, even as Kanarik, his proper share of respect in the eyes of the tight-rope girl. Kanarik was aware of this latter rivalry, so that the wrestling match developed into a genuine battle. Mottke girded his loins

and before Kanarik had even begun to fight, had him stretched out flat upon the mat. . . .

The audience, enthused by the struggle, broke out into loud hurrahs for Mottke. All through the match, indeed, the sympathy of the crowd had been, as usual, with the younger opponent. The spectators whistled, clapped and called vociferously for the little Spaniard. But it was Kanarik who reappeared to take the applause. Whereupon the crowd hissed and called even louder for the "Spaniard." But still Kanarik came out again and again, while Mottke, afraid to face the audience once more, cowered in a corner within. The audience, however, refused to be quieted until Old Terach himself had led out Mottke by the hand, bowing and pointing to himself and the youngster, although nobody knew what he meant by this procedure.

From this time Mottke became a bona fide hurdy-gurdyman, who could do his bit of "work" and appeal to the countryside audiences. Old Terach realized the asset he possessed in the boy and began to treat him differently. And Kanarik had gained a serious rival.

For a while, then, the crowd calmed down. The hurdy-gurdy stopped playing. The climax of the show was due. The world-famous Spanish tight-rope walker Mari (among the hurdy-gurdy fraternity all world-renowned performers come of Hispanic lineage) was to walk the wire. The audience gasped. Mari had acquired a genuine reputation thereabouts, and it was said that certain wealthy landowners followed her about from one town to another, just to see her marvellous performance. It was also rumored that other rich men had deserted their wives and families for love of Mari, and had laid their fortunes at her feet. But she would have none of them, and preferred to remain with the troupe.

She soon made her appearance before the public, led out by the hand, as had been Mottke, by Old Terach. She was dressed in a Spanish dancer's red skirt, which glittered with spangles and coral beads. Her bare arms, neck, and legs were covered with pink powder; her lips and cheeks had been rouged, and her hair fell in golden curls over her shoulder and across her breasts. She bowed to the audience, took her little silk parasol in one hand, hopped upon the back of the old mountebank, who was kneeling before her, and grasped the rope which was suspended from the poles. In a trice she had reached the top of the rope and was soon standing upon the wire, blowing down kisses to the crowd with both her hands. But none smiled. All were rooted to the ground in open-mouthed, breathless wonder, waiting to see what she would do. She opened her parasol and began to glide along the wire as lightly as a zephyr. With the parasol she balanced her slight figure, and from below, as she glided over the wire in the sunshine. she looked not so much like a human creature as some beautiful red bird with a human face. Underneath, following her every step, watched Old Terach, Kanarik and Mottke, their faces upturned, anxious, their arms outspread, ready to catch her in case some mishap should occur.

But the girl herself felt no anxiety. She was as much at home upon the wire as upon dry land. She hopped on one foot, went through a hoop, threw the parasol from one hand to the other, and enchanted the onlookers with the supple movements of her lithe body, her shapely arms and legs. And one and all they fell in love with her; even the women succumbed to her charms, and uttered not a word, not daring even to breathe aloud, lest the girl take fright and topple over.

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Mottke now loved her a thousand times more than ever: he was ready to die for her; as he watched, his heart jumped to his mouth in fear that something would befall her, and tears came to his eyes. And when at last she descended safely, and the people, — who had restrained their enthusiasm — burst suddenly into applause, whistling and shouting, Mottke was almost mad with joy. He hopped about, velled in glee, and followed Old Terach, who had set the girl on his shoulder and was carrying her about the admiring throng. She held her parasol open and inverted, and the crowd threw money into it, each according to his means. The men and women who had come to see the show from their own carriages threw in silver coins. The "rich" men whom local gossip had credited with desertion of their wives and children, threw whole rouble-pieces. The girl caught the offerings in her parasol, and whatever fell to the ground Mottke would pick up. For this time Mottke, and not Kanarik, followed the old man and the girl, since the audience preferred the youngster. And Mottke was happy — and in love.

CHAPTER VI

'NEATH THE STARS

COME time after this memorable performance. Mottke sat beside a campfire in the open fields, watching the horses graze. Beside him lay Kanarik, wrapped in a warm blanket, sleeping soundly, while Mottke counted his snores. The forest darkness was growing deeper and the fields were moist. He could not sleep. He was looking towards the wagon, which stood not far from where he sat. In the night it looked like a sleepy, dilapidated shack with closed shutters, through the cracks of which came rays of light, and to Mottke it seemed as if a child were crying within. . . . He crawled over on all fours, listened, and tried to peek in through a crack. . . . But he could discern nobody, and heard not a sound. So he resumed his former position. How strange everything seemed, and how far away was home. — the home to which he would nevermore return! He was strongly attracted to the strangers with whom he had taken up, yet at the same time he feared them. He was thinking, too, of the girl. She was so beautiful. He had never beheld her equal. What would he not do to see her now again? Well, anyway, he was happy, for was she not near?

His thoughts brought his gaze back to the wagon, and he stole close to it again, trying to peep within. Again he beheld nothing. Yet he felt a certain satisfaction in his proximity to her dwelling and would have liked to shout for joy. But he restrained his mood. He went back to the fire, added a few twigs to the blaze and sat down once more.

He was beginning to grow cold, and suddenly a yearning came upon him. The picture of his mother arose, and he could see her sitting, sewing his pants, and gazing at him. He recalled how she had come running to the lockup where "Blind Pearl" was thrashing him, and he promised himself that when he had accumulated a pile of money he would come back to his home town, return to the cellar in a splendid coach drawn by two horses, and he would take his mother into the coach with him and drive her through the village and show everybody that she was his mother, — his very own. He would bring her precious gifts and costly garments. All this for his mother. But for his father he would bring nothing; he would not take him into the coach; he would not even talk to him.

That he surely would be rich some day and come back to his mother, — this be believed implicitly. And he was all the more strengthened in his hopes by the fact that he had met with the hurdy-gurdy troupe and they had taught him to "work."

But in the midst of all these hopes the vision of the girl stood out more prominently than anything else. Somehow or other, his confidence in the future was bound up, in his thoughts, with her. Why or how, he did not know, nor did he care to ponder over it.

Suddenly one of the shutters of the booth was thrust aside, and the girl put her head through the window. Mottke could see clearly, by the light that shone upon her, the lustre of her hair and the pallor of her cheeks. His heart fluttered, and from sheer elation he jumped up and sat right down again. He was afraid to look in

her direction, when he heard a "Hush-sh, hush-sh." He crawled over to the window as before.

"Is Kanarik asleep?"

Mottke nodded.

"Sh! And bend down."

Mottke did as he was told and a pair of feet, as light as a bird's, hopped down upon his back.

"Come away from here. They might hear us," she whispered into his ear like a summer breeze, grasping him by the hand.

They ran off towards the woods, and the moist grass silenced their footsteps. They sat down at the edge of the forest.

"Hush!" whispered the girl into his ear. "If they ever catch us they'll make an end to both of us." And she placed her hand across his mouth lest he utter a tell-tale cry of joy. For she felt that he was ready to do so.

Mottke nodded compliance, and his eyes answered that he understood, and that he would not utter a sound. But it was so dark that she could see neither his nodding nor his eyes.

They sat for some time without exchanging a syllable. Mottke's heart beat strangely. He was uncertain whether this was all a dream or blessed reality. He was overwhelmed with a sudden embarrassment and was ashamed to look the girl in the face. His eyes were turned to the blackness of the night, and he surrendered himself completely to the girl's caprice.

She began to play with him like a pet dog. She took his face in her hands, turned it towards the fire and surveyed it carefully. Then she released him and commanded him to look sideways. Then she suddenly asked, "Are you really a thief? Have you really escaped from prison? Eh?"

Mottke did not hesitate for a second, but nodded

affirmatively.

"What were you imprisoned for, then? Did you steal something?"

"I not only stole. I committed murder. I had a fight with some young fellows, and stabbed one of them and sent him off to the other world. Oh, I'm not afraid of anybody!"

Mottke wanted to raise himself still higher in her estimation.

"I'm not only unafraid of plain people. I've already sent off a cop, — jabbed a knife in between his ribs. I'm afraid of nobody."

"Nobody?" And the girl stared at him.

"Nobody," answered Mottke, confidently.

"And how about the old man?"

"Which old man?"

"Old Terach." And she pointed to the wagon.

"Him? Just let him start something and I'll show him what I can do!"

"Why, everybody's afraid of him! Even Kanarik!" The girl removed his hat and caressed his hair very gently.

"Your hair is strong and thick," she said, pulling his locks.

Mottke laughed.

"Sh! Sh! They'll hear us!" cautioned the girl, shuddering.

"I ain't afraid of them. Let 'em hear!"

"They'll give us a beating."

"Whom?"

"Me and you."

"I'd like to see them try it!"

"What would you do?"

"Stab 'em with a knife."

The girl was caressing his cheek. There was a long pause, and Mottke listened to the beating of his heart.

"Will you take my part?" resumed the girl.

"Do they beat you?"

"Sometimes, when I don't want to mind."

"And why don't you want to mind them?"

"Because I don't like them. Both of them."

"So they beat you for that?"

"Yes. Kanarik more than the old man. He wants me to love him, and I refuse."

"Why do you refuse?"

"Because I hate him. When he sleeps he whistles through his nose just like a canary. And he's redheaded. And he's always sweating. I hate him."

"And he beats you?"

She nodded yes.

"And the old man lets him?"

"Sometimes the old man beats me himself. But I like him, so he may beat me."

"What, — is he your father?"

"No. He says he bought me when I was a child. I've been with him for a long time, and he's brought me up, taught me to walk the wire and to 'work,' and I like him."

"So he beats you, too."

"Yes, but he may. I like him, I tell you, and I like to have him give me a thrashing."

"Why?"

"Because I do."

Pause. They are silent. The camp-fire dies slowly away, and around them all is quiet, except for the noise

of the animals grazing and the occasional stamping of their hoofs in the damp earth.

"And do you like to be thrashed?" she asked suddenly.

"No. I hit back with a knife."

"If I like anybody they may strike me all they please. And you may strike me, too, when I feel like it. But Kanarik I detest. Will you take my part?"

"Yes."

"Could you go over to him now, where he is lying by the fire, and stick a knife through him?"

"Have you got a knife? I'll do it."

"And you won't be afraid.?"

"No."

"Prove it."

"Sure."

"Here's a knife. Go over and stab him." And from under her shawl, which was all that covered her nakedness, she drew a long dirk and gave it to Mottke, who took it, looked at her, and rose from his place.

He began to slink up behind Kanarik, but when he had already come within a few paces of his intended victim the girl darted across the grass on tip-toe and seized him by the legs. He had not heard her approach and did not understand how she had caught up with him.

"Don't. Not yet."

"Let me. Once I say something, it's as good as done. Don't think I'm afraid."

"I know. But don't do it yet. You'd have to run away, and I don't want you to leave."

Mottke, undecided, stood still.

"Come deeper into the woods with me," whispered the girl, "and I'll tell you something."

And they both slunk away, crawling on all fours into the woods, until they could no longer see the fire or the van.

"Stay here with us and I'll come out to you every night. Will you?"

Mottke was silent.

"And when you stab Kanarik, I'll become your sweetheart. Yes?"

Mottke was silent.

The girl opened her shawl and for a while revealed her naked arms and breasts. Mottke saw the white of her skin glistening under the light of the stars. But not for long. The girl drew the shawl about her again.

Mottke was breathless, but edged closer to her and attempted to embrace her.

A cutting blow from a whip burned across his cheek. This deterred him only for an instant, and he made another rush upon the girl. A blow from the whip cut him across the other cheek. He could not tell from what direction the blows came, and the girl, as fleet as the wind, evaded his grasp, whispering, "Not yet, I say. After you've slashed Kanarik's throat I'll be your sweetheart."

Mottke still had in his hand the dirk which she had given him, and he advanced with hasty step in the direction of the sleeping Kanarik.

"Stop, or I'll holler!" she cried after him in subdued tones.

He came to a halt.

Like a wind she dashed off and disappeared into the night.

Mottke gave chase, but already she was inside the wagon, at the little window. Before closing the shutter she let the shawl fall from her once again, and Mottke again beheld her enchanting body glistening in the starlight.

He hid the dirk in the back of his boot, sank to the ground and sprawled upon the grass, staring up at the sky and wondering whether all that had passed that night was a dream or reality.

CHAPTER VII

THE "ROYAL" HOTEL

FEW weeks later the hurdy-gurdy performers arrived at a certain town ready for "work." Here they put up not in their wagon, but at a hostelry that rejoiced in the proud name of "Royal." The proprietors were Chayim Spassfaygel and his daughter, the attractive Dvayrele, a buxom young woman whose real status - whether that of widow, divorcee or deserted wife - nobody knew. The one certainty was that she had no husband, and merchants and travelingsalesmen liked to stop at her place whenever they passed through the town. Nor was such patronage limited only to strangers. In the long winter evenings the young blades of the village would sit in the "Royal" playing cards, and every once in so often the townsfolk would awaken to the fact that some respectable young man had gambled away his dowry at Dvayrele's hotel. And the gossips would whisper, "Dvayrele's got another fish in her net." In this royal inn, then, Old Terach, his wife, Kanarik and the young girl made their stay, while Mottke slept outside, in the booth, so as to keep an eve on the horses.

After "work" the members of the troupe sat in their room, the windows of which faced an orchard. But the shades of the windows were always drawn, so that the room became known as "the dark room," and it was

here that the "terrible deeds" attributed to Dvayrele used to take place. It happened that Old Terach was particularly satisfied with the day's performance, as the proceeds were large, and as usual when he was content with the day's "work" he drank copious quantities of tea from a Russian samovar that was part of the wagon's outfit. His boots off, he half lay and half sat upon the bed, the table brought up close to the bedside, and himself enveloped in the cloud of steam that rose from his cup. His forehead wrinkled into perspiring furrows, he smoked away at his pipe with evident satisfaction, now tickling the "witch" under the arms with the mouthpiece, now winking at the girl, who sat rubbing her legs with ointment after her tricks upon the wire, and now at Mottke, who stood nearby holding the bottle of salve for Mari.

"A nice pair. We'll do good business with them," said the old man.

"Sh! They might hear you."

At this point Kanarik came striding in, and commenced to scold Mottke because he wasn't outside watching the horses. The old couple, however, interceded in the boy's behalf, maintaining that he should be permitted to remain inside, since there was no danger of the horses being stolen, as they were in a barn.

"Say, Mari," said Kanarik. "Do you know that the landowner who fell in love with you at Plotzk has

followed you to this town? He's here."

Mari turned a deep red.

"How do you know? Have you seen him?" asked Old Terach, interested.

"Yes. On the market-place. And he's stopping at this very hotel."

"You don't say!"

"Yes, sir!" And Kanarik motioned to Old Terach that he could not speak with Mottke present.

"Hey, mahmzer! Go see to the horses," said Old

Terach to Mottke in a very soft voice.

"Why to the horses?" questioned the "old witch."
"Let him go to the bar-room and have a glass of beer.
Maybe there are some guests there, and he can earn something," she insinuated.

"Good idea, Mottke. Perhaps something profitable will turn up. For yourself, you know. You can keep

whatever you make," suggested the old man.

Mottke glanced about, and his eyes met Mari's. He grasped his cap and left the room. But not to go to the bar. Instead, he sneaked around the back of the house, went into the orchard and sought to locate the window of the "dark room." He recognized it at once by the grey curtains. Tiptoing up to it stealthily he climbed the wall with the agility of a cat; hanging upon the hooks of the shutters he managed to find a crack in one of them, and against this he placed his ear, which caught a word now and then.

He could not tell exactly what was going on, but he felt it—as if his heart told him. . . . He could see that Kanarik was scolding Mari and threatening her with his fist. And the old folks were arguing with her in good natured fashion. They were showing her money, but the young girl stamped her foot and shook her head.

At this juncture there entered Dvayrele, the proprietress of the place, followed by a Jew who was dressed in modern garb and carried a cane. For a while Dvayrele and the newcomer whispered with Old Terach and Kanarik, then Dvayrele came over to Mari, played with her hair, smiling and chatting with her, and kissing

her. The "old witch" combed her hair and helped her put on another waist. Mari made no resistance, although her face glowed. Kanarik was cleaning up the place, removing the bottle of ointment to one of the corners, while the Jew looked on with a good-humored smile and soon disappeared. Mottke guessed what it was all about. . . . His heart began to beat faster and faster; his hands and feet trembled, and something seemed to be tugging at his throat and at his very heart. Of a sudden he became desperate. He did not care if the whole house, himself included, should sink through the earth that very moment. Yet he was inquisitive as to what would happen next.

The Jew with the cane and the sweet smile returned, bringing with him a tall, well-dressed Gentile with a flowing moustache. The latter was bashful, bowing to all as he expressed his greetings. Dvayrele, wearing a single-earring, invited him to a seat at the table. Old Terach, as a mark of respect, slipped on his coat, and even Kanarik smiled. But Mari was not to be seen; she was hiding somewhere; soon, however, Dvayrele took her out of a corner, much against the young girl's will, and brought her over to the table. The Gentile bowed to her, extended his hand, and both Dvayrele and Mari sat down. Beer was brought, and the glasses were filled. Someone produced a pack of cards and a game was soon in full swing.

Mottke could no longer control himself. He wanted to jump right in through the window, but he managed to resist this impulse. He let himself down and returned to the room. It was locked, so he knocked upon the door, telling himself that he did not care what would happen now.

From within came a voice. "Who is there?" He replied, in low tones, "It is I, Mottke!"

Inside there was short discussion, and then the door was opened by Kanarik, who barred Mottke's passage and asked, "Well, what do you want?"

"I'll tell you later," Mottke replied, pushing his way into the room.

"Ah!" exclaimed the Gentile with the large moustache, "here is the Spaniard who won the match today. Very fine. Very fine." And he clapped his hands in applause.

"Yes. I'm taking him to Warsaw soon to wrestle with Bishka," said Old Terach. And then to Mottke, aside: "What have you come in for? What do you want? The horses will be stolen!"

"Let him watch the horses," answered Mottke, pointing to Kanarik. "I want to stay here."

"Yes. Let him stay," urged the old woman.

"Will the Spaniard have a drink with us, eh?" asked the Gentile. "Please." And the Pole filled a glass for Mottke.

Mottke, embarrassed, made a gesture in token of refusal, — yet he emptied his glass.

"Here he is, the little champion. Just look at his tiny hands," said Dvayrele, touching him gently and slyly winking at him.

Mottke broke into a perspiration, turned red with embarrassment and winked back to her just as slyly.

Meanwhile the game of cards progressed. The company seemed to have forgotten Mottke. Dvayrele's wink had so upset him that he, on his side, forgot the Polish gentleman and Mari, who sat there like a stranger, watching the game. Mottke gazed straight at Dvayrele, trying to catch her eye, but she, too, seemed to

have become oblivious to his presence, so absorbed had she become in the playing.

Mottke looked at Mari. She was angry, and would not turn in his direction. He felt that she had seen him exchange glances with the attractive proprietress and that her sulkiness arose from that fact. As he watched he saw Mari edge closer to the Polish guest, smuggling cards to him, at the same time making it appear as if she were nestling close to him like a puppy, and caressing his hand. A sudden malicious impulse seized Mottke: he could have thrown himself upon the man and choked him. The jealous youth stared at Mari, but she did not deign to notice him. Whereupon he pulled her by the sleeve and was rewarded with an angry look, after which she continued to watch the Gentile's cards and to indicate which cards he should throw out. Mottke could have struck the man dead on the spot.

And now, when the game was at its height, Dvayrele arose and, as if she had suddenly recalled something, said that down in the guest-room quite a few people were waiting for the hurdy-gurdy troupe, and that perhaps they could make some money there. Indeed, it was expressly for them that the guests had sent her to their room, and here she had forgotten her errand and had sat down to play cards instead. Old Terach arose, took a tambourine in his hand, and nodded to Kanarik. "Come. Let's see if we can pick up a few kopeks. You, too, Mottke." And the old woman went with them, but would not let the "dear child" Mari come along, for the girl was too tired. "She's worked so hard today." And the "old witch" left with the others. Only Mari and the Gentile remained, and they continued

the card-game. But Mottke, seeing this, stopped upon the threshold and refused to move further.

"Come along, mahmzer, let's make some money," and Old Terach shoved him by the shoulder.

Mottke wormed out of his grasp and stood his ground.

"What's up?"

"Nothing," retorted Mottke.

Kanarik was signalling to the youngster with his eyes. "Clear out, mahmzer. Don't you see they've got to be alone?"

"No I don't!" snapped Mottke.

"What!"

Old Terach came up close to the boy. But they wanted to avoid a scene, so Dvayrele took him under the arm, patted his cheeks with her soft hand, looked into his eyes and said, with that sly smile of hers, "Whoever he'll refuse to go for, he won't refuse me. What can he get from you, anyway? But he knows what he can get from me." This she spoke in such an insinuating manner, and with such a glance, that Mottke thought she was ready to take him to her that instant. . . And he could not resist the temptation to go along.

So he smiled back into her eyes and left the room with her.

Behind him he heard the door being locked upon Mari and the Polish gentlemen. Somehow he felt a pang of sorrow, but the warmth of Dvayrele's buxom person made him soon forget.

But no sooner did she enter the bar-room with Mottke than she forgot him completely. She was at once lost in the crowd of guests — teamsters, butchers, and visiting merchants, — who were waiting for her. To one she brought a glass of beer sweetened by her own

winning smile; to another she served a half of a roast goose, with a caress to spice the meal; still another ordered a drink of moonshine whiskey, which he drank down with a sly pinch at her cheek. . . . Mottke looked on from his corner, astounded, and not knowing what was happening to him. He suddenly called to mind Mari and the man, who were locked in the "dark room," all by themselves. He stole out of the bar-room and back to the apartment. The door was still locked, and through the key-hole he could see nothing, as the key was placed in it. He ran around to the orchard and again making his way up the wall he found the crack in the shutter from which he could see into the room. the crack was covered by the drawn curtain. He lowered himself, procured a thin piece of wood, returned, and with it carefully thrust the curtain aside. Now he could see what was going on inside. . . . His blood began to boil and he felt as never before. He pressed. with his entire body under the shutter, so as to raise it with no noise. Then he broke the window chain. This was easy, as it was rusty with age and yielded at once. Then, suddenly, Mottke jumped into the room.

Mari, who was half undressed, her hair loose, started up in fright from the bed where she had been sitting. The Gentile, too, felt ill at ease before Mottke, upon whom he looked with a queer smile, and began looking for his trousers or his coat to cover his seminakedness.

Mottke felt a certain pity for him, and stood undecided in the middle of the room, himself frightened and at a loss.

Meanwhile Mari stole over to Mottke. He saw her brownish bare skin, which looked out of her torn jacket,—and he struck her over the head. She made no outcry,

she did not even run away, but thrust something into his hand. He felt something soft, and by the dim light of the lamp could make out that it was a leather article. He knew at once that it was a pocketbook, and instinctively hid it immediately.

"Hide it and go away, or you'll be caught . . . the Gentile will raise a racket when he finds out."

Mottke heard the whispered words behind him, and could not yet make out just what was going on. He stood there still, irresolute. The Gentile continued to grope about in the semi-darkness for his mislaid clothing.

The girl, however, sought to calm them.

"Stay here. Stay here. He's going out." And to Mottke she whispered. "Run away and hide. It's the Gentile's pocketbook. He'll start an awful rumpus."

Mottke instinctively obeyed. He jumped out as he had entered — through the window.

Behind him he heard the girl close the shutter.

CHAPTER VIII

THE STRUGGLE FOR MARI

MOTTKE went into the barn and by the light of the lantern he examined the leather wallet that Mari had thrust into his hands. He opened it, and what he beheld frightened him, for there was a large roll of money within. He did not know what to do with it. Then, recalling what Nathan the Thief used to do with stolen articles, he took the collar off the horse's neck, and through a hole shoved the wallet deep into the straw. This done, he replaced the collar.

He then lay down in his corner and began to think. Somehow he was angry, and felt like fighting. Against whom was this anger? Against everybody, and against himself most of all. He felt desperate. It did not matter now what would happen. He was ready for anything. Then it suddenly occurred to him to take out the wallet, climb back into the dark room and throw the money into her face, or perhaps to give it to pretty Dvayrele right before Mari's eyes. But at once came the thought: "It would be a waste of good money. Better let it remain hidden." And Mari, the wirewalker, no longer concerned him, nor did he care a bit about Kanarik. He grew weary of everything connected with the hurdy-gurdy life and thought of running away.

Yet was he indifferent? His blood boiled within him, and his anger against himself rose higher. Should he

go to her and give her a good thrashing, smash her face for her and then be off? — No, it wouldn't be worth while. Anyway, he no longer cared for her. But the money itself was good to have. Yes, money is good, for with it one may travel wherever he pleases and buy what his heart desires.

And the money hidden in the collar became of a sudden dear to him. He wanted to take it out, feast his eyes upon it, count it; but he feared lest somebody enter and catch him at it, so he restrained himself. Another moment and his affection for the wire-walker warmed into new life. "Just the same," he told himself, "she is a good girl. She gave the money to me." And he determined that sooner than let Kanarik take the wallet away from him, he would fight Kanarik for it.

This recalled to Mottke the difference in the way Kanarik and he went clothed: how Kanarik wore a pair of fine boots with lacquered tops, and a velvet vest, while he had nothing but torn shoes that the "old witch" had cast aside after having worn them for years. and a pair of pants that needed patching badly. Moreover, Kanarik could have a drink whenever he pleased, or eat ice-cream, while he hadn't a kopeck, except for a small coin that he would manage to conceal in his shoe when it was thrown to him as he turned the crank of the music box, or a mite that the old woman gave him in secret occasionally for scratching her back before she went to sleep. And Mottke wondered why he had not thought of all this before, and how he had not been ashamed to walk the streets in discarded women's shoes and torn pants.

"First I'll buy myself a pair of boots with lacquered tops, — boots that'll creak when I walk. Then I'll get a pair of velvet trousers like Old Terach's, and a big

whip. And I'll let a large shock of hair grow over my forehead, and I'll show them how a hurdy-gurdyman should look!"

More and more, as he considered his various plans, Mari became dear to him, because she had provided him with means whereby he might achieve all this, and because of the money which she was to give him in the future. He felt that she was his. She belonged to him like any horse and wagon which he might have owned. How was it that he had not known this before, and that he had allowed her to give all the money she earned to Kanarik? Never again would he permit Kanarik to look at her or speak to her. He would fight Kanarik, and give it to him hard! His fists clenched at the thought.

Noises outside the barn interrupted Mottke's day dreaming. Someone was shouting and footsteps were approaching the barn. Through a crack shone a ray of light. It was all the same to Mottke now; he was ready for the struggle. He closed his eyes and waited. Soon came a knocking at the door.

"Open, mahmzer, open! Open, I say!"
Mottke lay as if no one had spoken.

"Open, you mahmzer, open!"

It was Old Terach. Mottke was fond of him, in gratitude for his having taken him into the company and having taught him how to "work." He felt, moreover, a certain respect for the old fellow. So he opened the door.

"Where have you hidden the wallet that the girl gave you?" bellowed Kanarik angrily, close behind Old Terach.

"No shouting. And let me talk," interrupted the old man, trying to calm Kanarik.

"See here, mahmzer," he began, "better turn that wallet over to me. The Polish fellow is making an awful fuss; he ran for the sergeant of police, and we'll all come to a black finish."

"A wallet? What kind of wallet?" inquired Mottke, as if in astonishment.

"The pocketbook that Mari stole from the Gentile's pocket and passed to you," explained Kanarik.

"She gave me no pocketbook," answered Mottke, "and I don't know of any."

"Come into the house," the men exclaimed, and dragged Mottke along after them.

In the "dark room" Dvayrele was running about wringing her hands and moaning that the hurdy-gurdy troupe would be the ruin of her. The sergeant of police would arrive and close up her tavern, she cried. Mari stood with hair dishevelled, dressed in a thin gown, through which showed her naked arms and breasts. She had not even had time to slip on a jacket. She appeared to be most unconcerned, and allowed herself to be observed and devoured by the greedy glances of the teamsters, butchers and fishermen who jostled against each other at the open door, to which they had been attracted by the cries of the Pole demanding his eighty-five roubles. But the latter was no longer there. He had gone for the sergeant.

"She's worth the money, such luck may I have in the coming year," commented one butcher, eyeing the girl well and delivering his judgment as an expert in such matters.

"For eighty-five roubles I'd rather buy me a mare. But I'd gladly give the price of a Sabbath meal for her," bargained Leibele the teamster.

"Bah! What does your Sabbath meal amount to?

No, my dear fellow, you can't buy any goods for that money. Back to your deaf Chayeh, with her bandaged chin, and she'll make fish chowder for you."

The crowd laughed.

At this point the old hurdy-gurdyman and Kanarik entered, leading Mottke.

"Ah," came from the crowd. "Here's the real fellow."

The old man pushed the crowd back from the doorway, slammed the door in the men's faces and locked it.

"Now listen to me, mahmzer," he growled, turning to Mottke, "Hand over that money or I'll give you over to the police. As sure as I'm a Jew I'll surrender you to the police. I'll tell them that you escaped from jail, that you haven't any passport, and that I haven't any idea who your father is. Hand over the money and I'll keep it all quiet. Otherwise, it'll go hard with you."

"Turn me over to the police. I should worry. I'll tell them that you stole the girl, and that you've been selling her to drunkards for money, and that if she doesn't do as you say you beat her, and that you deal in stolen articles, and that you sold to Dvayrele those silver candle-sticks we got in Zhachlin, and that we are staying here because we're waiting for a customer from Warsaw who is supposed to come for some goods that walks on two legs. And I'll tell 'em lots more. Then we'll all go to jail together and be put into the same cell. And it'll feel more homelike."

"What are you babbling about? What fairy-tales are you trying to invent? Who will believe you, anyway?" queried the hurdy-gurdyman, frightened at Mottke's torrent of threats. He was taken aback at the youngster's knowledge of things which they had

been trying to keep from him. He thought that Mottke had heard and seen nothing.

"What silver candle-sticks are you talking about?" interjected Dvayrele, turning pale. "Who told you this? My brother sent me some fish from Zhachlin. Come and see for yourself. The case is yet unpacked."

"Fish!" Mottke laughed. "I know what kind of fish!"

"Mottke dear," begged the "old witch," wringing her hands, "what are you talking about? What's this I hear from your lips? Who told it all to you?"

Mottke looked the old woman straight in the eyes and was seized with a strong desire to laugh.

"And this piece of cholera, this cheap little trickster," cried Kanarik, pointing to Mottke and addressing Mari, "this chicken thief you've taken to yourself, eh? You — a wire-walker and an acrobat, eh? You gave him the money secretly, did you?" Kanarik glared at the girl, his eyes ablaze with anger, and raised his arm threateningly. The girl's eyes shone with fear lest he strike her.

"Just dare to lay a hand on her and I'll stretch you out dead on the floor!" cried Mottke, thrusting his clenched fists into Kanarik's face.

"What? You'll stop me, I suppose?" sneered Kanarik. "Well, here's one on account," and he slapped Mari. "And here's another for you."

But before Kanarik had a chance to strike, Mottke was upon him. With one jump, like a mad dog, he clutched his opponent by the throat and began to choke him. He bit into Kanarik's windpipe, and the veins in the young man's throat began to swell, looking as if they were ready to snap. Kanarik attempted to squirm out of Mottke's grasp, but no sooner had he done so than his knees collapsed and he fell to the floor.

Mottke pounced upon him, and with his teeth upon Kanarik's throat kept thumping away with his fists upon his opponent's face. The women screamed and tried to separate them, but the peacemakers were rewarded with kicks in their stomachs and moved off. The old acrobat seized his whip and lashed Mottke across the head, face and hands, until the youngster's features and limbs swelled from the blows. But Mottke felt no pain. He got a stranglehold upon Kanarik and both combatants seemed to roll into a single ball, biting and striking frantically. Kanarik's labored breathing could be heard from under Mottke's body. Dvayrele wrung her hands in despair; then opening the door she appealed to her friends, the teamsters. "Help! They will ruin me! The sergeant is coming!"

With heavy sticks the men succeeded in breaking the fighters' grapple. Kanarik was bleeding profusely and Mottke's face was almost blue.

Throughout the entire struggle Mari had stood by, calmly looking on. Not a trace of emotion was visible upon her features. But when Mottke had thrown Kanarik and was striking him full in the face there came to her lips a slight smile, scarcely noticeable. For she knew that with those blows she was being transferred from one hand to the other, and she rejoiced at the outcome.

Meanwhile the proprietress hurriedly wiped the blood from the floor lest it increase the sergeant's suspicions. Kanarik had to be taken into the kitchen where his face was wrapped in cold towels. Mottke stood in a corner, sulking, while the old man came up close to Mari and pointed at the leather strap which he wore as a belt.

"You'll pay for this later," he promised. "Just wait till we leave town. It's all your fault."

But Mottke did not raise his voice against the old hurdy-gurdyman. Old Terach, in his eyes, had a right to beat Mari. He had bought her and had taught her how to "work." His claim upon her was clear.

CHAPTER IX

"HAVE YOU A PASSPORT?"

THE sergeant of police arrived with the Polish gentleman. The latter, hatless and without a tie, related with tears in his eyes what had happened and how he had been robbed of his pocketbook containing eighty-five roubles. He pointed to Mari and Mottke as he spoke. The sergeant, already an elderly man of sixty odd years, corpulent, broad-shouldered, with a protruding abdomen and a long blond beard which tapered down into two points, listened to the tale calmly and indifferently, smiling at the same time to Dvayrele.

"Well, what's this latest at your place, Mrs. Spass-faygel? All kinds of things occur here, Mrs. Spassfaygel,

at the Hotel Royal."

"What? At my place, Mr. Officer?" repeated Dvayrele, in feigned astonishment, with a laugh and a sly look. "The worthy officer likes to jest with a poor Jewess. Goodness, how dowdy I look," she exclaimed coquettishly, arranging her hair. "Am I to blame that this gentleman,"—she pointed to the Pole,—"comes here and wants to hire a woman from the hurdy-gurdy troupe? My hotel is a public house. I couldn't refuse the gentleman. Is it my fault?"

"We shall see later. But first of all I'd like to examine the passports. Ah! Mr. Chief Hurdy-Gurdyman, let me look over the passports of yourself and company."

"At once, Mr. Officer, at once," replied the old man.
"Really! Will worthy the officer sit here? It's not at

all comfortable or suited to his dignity," interrupted Dvayrele. "Please, let it be the desire of the worthy officer to come to my room. There the worthy officer may hear the case in full." She took the sergeant by the arm.

"We can serve the purposes of the law right here," answered the sergeant. But he arose and motioned to Old Terach, saying, "People! Follow me!"

In the dark corridor through which Dvayrele led the officer a hushed conversation took place between them, consisting of detached phrases.

"Madame Dvayrele, that'll never do. I cannot. It's the law. The Polish gentleman is a prominent personage. He will lodge complaint against me and I'll lose my position."

To this the proprietress replied in similar fashion.

"But Mr. Officer, you are the head of this town. You can do everything. You don't require any teaching. I leave it to you."

Whereupon something flashed in the officer's palm and he tried to guess in the dark, by feeling the size of the coin, how much it amounted to. Assuring himself that it was of a denomination commensurate with his station, he again protested his inability in the matter and dropped the piece into his trousers pocket.

Upon entering Dvayrele's room, which was neatly furnished with two high beds, a red table and a closet of silverware, the officer experienced a change of sentiment. He sat down at the table, and the proprietress suggested that he taste her fresh cooked fish. The officer declined.

"The law waits for me. The law first."

Dvayrele called her father through the door.

"Pa, please serve the worthy officer a plate of cooked

fish." And Chayim Spassfaygel reappeared shortly with a steaming dish.

"Ah, Mr. Spassfaygel, how are you?" was the officer's

greeting. "I haven't seen you for ever so long."

"Worthy officer," was the tavern-keeper's response, "take my advice and taste that fish. Such fish you never ate in all your life. A treat!" And old Spassfaygel smacked his lips.

"I'll have a taste, Mr. Spassfaygel, —a mere taste," replied the "worthy officer," as if conferring a favor, and he brought the plate closer to him. "It's really good," he confessed, between bites, crunching away contentedly.

During this scene the acrobats stood around, their hats removed, and Old Terach held his documents in readiness. Opposite the troupe stood the Polish gentleman. All watched the officer devour the fish and their mouths began to water.

The fish having disappeared, Dvayrele suggested some roast chicken and fried liver, and Chayim soon brought in the appetizing dishes. Whereupon the mouths of the onlookers began to water more than ever, and the teamsters envied the worthy officer, and wished him as many curses as his body could bear. . . .

"Well, now. Let's see your papers," asked the officer, having pulled the dish of fried liver close to him.

"Here are the passports for myself and my wife and two children: I am Gedaliah Shabasnick, and this is my wife Chayeh Shabasnick, and this is my daughter Hannah Shabasnick, nineteen years old"—he pointed to Mari—"and this"—pointing to Mottke—is my youngest son, Mottke Shabasnick. And this is the passport of my oldest acrobat, Meyer Aaron Kanarik."

"Meyer Aaron Kanarik, eh?" repeated the officer, munching the liver and smacking his lips. "Well,

well, Meyer Aaron Kanarik, everything's all right. And now, what else have you there?"

"This is a license permitting me to give performances on the streets. It's from the government secretary at Warsaw," added the old man, "and it cost me a lot of money. But I got it from the government secretary himself."

"Fine. Fine." The officer examined the document and resumed his meal. "Anything else there?"

"Yes. Here is a letter from a colonel. That's what he signs himself. And this is what he writes to my daughter: 'Milaya Mari — Lovely Mari,' he calls her. He says that he's in love with her skill and with herself, and that he will try to have the authorities present her with a medal." And Old Terach offered the letter for the officer's inspection, with a look of triumph.

"From a colonel, eh? Very fine indeed!" exclaimed the worthy official, shoving the empty plate away and bringing the letter closer to the lamp. "Yes, so it is. A real colonel. Keep this letter safe. It is an important document," he counselled, giving it back to the hurdy-gurdyman. "So he promised her a medal, eh?" he asked, pointing to Mari. "She's really earned it. Well, well. Everything's as it should be. And now sir," he began afresh, turning to the Polish gentleman, who had been standing in a corner apart from the rest, desirous of showing that he was too well-bred to interrupt others while they were engaged in eating or in conversation, "what have you against these excellent people? You see what a remarkable letter they have received from a colonel."

"But they have robbed me. They've stolen eightyfive roubles from me. It was these two," and he pointed at Mari and Mottke.

"First of all," demanded the officer, rising, "how did you come to them? How dare you approach a woman who receives love-letters from a colonel? Did you get permission from the Colonel? Or from me? In the second place, you had the presumption to annoy a young lady, an acrobat, who possesses medals, and who corresponds with a colonel. Do you know that she could hail you into court for this? Thirdly, you claim that some money has been stolen from you. Who stole it? The lady? No, sir! I cannot bring myself to believe that a young lady who receives letters from a colonel should pick the pockets of a stranger. Was it this boy, then? And the officer indicated Mottke. "Why, he is yet a mere child! Didn't you read the passport? Sixteen years old! Well, could he by force take money away from a big fellow like you? Whom are you trying to tell this to? Let's search him. Come over here, boy," he beckoned to Mottke.

Mottke walked over confidently, a grin upon his face. The officer began to search all over, — through Mottke's pockets, his shirt and his trousers, but to no avail. "Well, where is the money? He hasn't stolen any money from you. You are unjustly accusing these people whose official documents show them to be persons of eminent respectability."

"And in the fourth place," concluded the officer, chiding the Polish gentleman in a low voice, "when a man goes to a woman he shouldn't take a pocketbook with him. He should be careful. And anyway," he added aloud with a stern countenance, pointing to the hurdy-gurdy people, "their documents are all right. Come now, let's see your own passport. Who may you be, I'd like to know? Have you a passport?"

CHAPTER X

MOTTKE DECLARES WAR AGAINST THE WORLD

MOTTKE lay in the wagon, was who were in the same yard, in the stable. It **FOTTKE** lav in the wagon, watching the horses was a summer night, quiet and starry, and he did not feel like sleeping. A sorrow such as he had never known before weighed over his spirit. His entire previous life seemed to pass before his sleepless eyes. He could see himself as a small boy being chased for theft, lying hidden under a pile of boards; or again. living all alone like a savage in the fields. Not that he felt any remorse over these days, or that he regretted them. To him it seemed that it was so decreed, and that it would so continue. But he was beginning to think about his future; for the first time in his life did Mottke give thought to the coming day, planning that it should not come upon him suddenly of its own will. but rather by prearrangement, as he should wish it. Was it the money which he had sewed into the horse's collar that gave rise to such thoughts? No: not that alone. More than the money, it was the passport which Kanarik had shown to the sergeant that led Mottke to meditate upon his future. Kanarik's passport was well engraved upon Mottke's memory: "Meyer Aaron Kanarik"—a man for himself, independent. And who was Mottke? Whose was he?

He began to envy Kanarik for the passport. For Kanarik might travel wherever he pleased, and could

leave the hurdy-gurdy troupe any moment. And he, Mottke, was bound to it. He had but to desert the company of performers and the very first policeman he would meet could demand his passport and arrest him for not having one. The old hurdy-gurdyman held him in the palm of his hand. And if Old Terach wished it, he could drive Mottke off. . . . "And you haven't any passport, either." He remembered Old Terach's words very well. And the old man could have him arrested as a man without a passport.

"No, a fellow must have a passport. Without a passport a man is no man," said Mottke to himself.

But where could he get one? If he should return to the town where he had been born he would be arrested. Perhaps he was being searched for, and perhaps not. But he was positive that should he return he would be arrested, even if he had committed no crime and had nothing on his conscience. (What he had done to his foster-sister before leaving his native village appeared to him no reason for arrest). He simply would be taken by the police, for no cause at all. With such a state of affairs he found nothing wrong. It just had to be. . . .

For Mottke was at war with the world. Therefore, whatever he could do to the world he was right in doing, and whatever the world could do to him it was equally right in returning. He had nothing against the world for such return. Nor had he a thought of making peace with the world. It just had to be because it was.

Now, in order best to conduct his war against mankind, he must have a passport. But again, where obtain one? Suddenly it came to him — why not Kanarik's? He could steal it and then pass himself off as the original Kanarik. He would say that he was a

few years older. But then — what if Kanarik should come to the police and say that his passport had been stolen, and suppose the police should commence a search for Meyer Aaron Kanarik? No, he must so arrange it that Kanarik would be powerless to complain to the authorities, and that nobody should know that there had ever lived any other Kanarik than he, Mottke. Kanarik must be wiped off the earth. He would drown him in a deep river or bury him in a deep grave which he would dig in the woods, so that the deed would never come to human knowledge.

Mottke did not stop for a moment to consider the ethics of the matter, nor did it even occur to him that he was contemplating a horrible crime, — cold-blooded murder. For to him, it was all self-evident. Wouldn't Kanarik kill Mottke if it were to Kanarik's advantage? And not only Kanarik. Everybody in the world, it seemed to Mottke, would kill him, and desired to kill him — only that he did not allow it, because he was the stronger. Nor did it occur to him to inquire into the reason for all this, or to wish that things were different. It was inevitable; it simply was so, because it was.

So he made his decision. He was to put Kanarik out of the way and take the passport as his own, and call himself henceforth Kanarik. But this must be accomplished cleverly and quietly, and he must wait for a favorable opportunity. Having arrived at a decision he grew calmer. He even tried to fall asleep, but this was out of the question. He lay gazing at the stars, whistling a tune and laughing to himself from time to time as he recalled some comical occurence of the day before.

As he lay thus he heard somebody stealing over to the wagon. By the white flash in the starry night Mottke

recognized that it was she, — Mari. He stopped whistling, and waited.

When the girl had come close to the wagon and had begun to tiptoe cautiously on the straw, Mottke called out aloud, angrily, "Who's there?"

"Hush, don't make a noise, Mottke. They might hear us. It's I, Mari."

"What do you want," questioned Mottke, severely.

"Mottke, don't you recognize me?" Mari stood still in her embarrassment.

"No. Go to Red Kanarik. Let him recognize you. And you'll become as red as he is."

Mottke's words fell upon Mari like a shower of cold water. Since she had given him the stolen money. since the struggle between Kanarik and Mottke, she had not spoken a word to the boy. He, too, had avoided her, not wishing to see her. Although he would not allow Kanarik to approach the girl, threatening that he would stab him if he dared to touch her, still Mottke himself neither touched nor spoke to her, and she went about in confusion, not knowing to whom she belonged. And here she was, ready to die for love of Mottke, since his victory over his rival. And now, for the first time, she had come to him of her own accord, after not having deigned to give him a look, and — such a welcome! . . . She wanted to leave. For a while she struggled with herself, but the "homelessness" in which she had been living since Mottke had won her away from Kanarik held her bound to the youth.

"What's the reason for this?" she asked. "Didn't I give you the money I got from the Pole? Why are you chasing me away?"

"Suppose you did give it to me. What of it? Do you deserve thanks for it? You should have taken it

to Kanarik, and he would love you for it. . . . And if you want it back, here, take it. It's in the collar. Take it and be off to Kanarik."

Mottke's feeling for the girl was a strange one. Since he had seen her with the Polish gentleman she charmed him more than ever, but his love for her had died out, leaving in its place a desire for vengeance which expressed itself in a stifled secret passion. . . . By having given to him the money which she had stolen from the Gentile, she became Mottke's property. And so Mottke considered her. So she, too, considered herself. It was a tacit understanding.

The girl was silent for a moment, thinking of some means by which she could reawaken Mottke's interest. He lay, in the meantime, whistling nonchalantly. Suddenly she spoke.

"Kanarik follows me about wherever I go. He kisses my hand and begs me to love him. He'll do anything for me, he says, and give me all I ask, if I'll only be his."

"Just try and do it, and I'll break the bones of both of you."

"He lay in waiting for me all night watching if I'd go to you. I wanted to come to you long before but he wouldn't let me. He wanted to beat me."

"What! He didn't let you go?" Mottke jumped up. "You just watch me thump his jaws for that tomorrow."

"Yes. He was watching me. With a whip. He wants me to elope with him. He says he'll take me to Warsaw. He knows a place there where we could make a lot of money."

"Elope? — And what did you say?"

"You can see for yourself that I didn't want to. I came here to tell you all about it."

Mottke thought for a while. Then suddenly his voice altered; it grew more tender, softer and full of secrecy.

"Climb up here!"

With a single bound the girl was inside the booth. Mottke embraced her and clasped her close to him. By the light of the stars he tried to look into her eyes.

"Do you love me? Say you do," asked Mottke.

"Yes, Mottke, I love you. Do with me as you please. Command me and I'll obey."

"I can't look you straight in the face since I saw you with that Gentile." And Mottke thrust her from him.

Her black eyes flashed. She was happy that the boy had admitted his jealousy. She grasped his hand and pressed it tightly to her breast. Mottke tore his hand away. She clutched at his knees, imploring him. "Beat me, cut me to pieces, but love me, love me!" she begged.

Mottke had raised his hand and was about to strike her, when his eyes were attracted by the lustre of her smooth, black hair that shone in the starlight. He ran his fingers through her hair and played with her tresses for a while.

"Mari!"

The girl gazed up to him. In her black eyes shone the spark which may be seen in the eyes of a devoted dog.

"Hide your eyes. I can't look into them." And he covered her eyes with his hands and kissed her hotly, his lips penetrating to her teeth.

"Come to me, Mari. Right here." He helped her up. "Come, sit down at my side and listen. I've something to tell you. But listen quietly. Do you love me? Do you want to be with me? Answer, yes or no. If you say no, I'll return the money that you gave me. Take it. Here it is."

Mottke ran over, got the collar, which was lying in another part of the wagon, ripped it open, took out the money and offered it to Mari.

"Here's your money, and go in the best of health.

I'll not touch you. Love anybody you please."

"Mottke, what are you talking about? I love you alone, you only. Beat me, do what you please to me, sell me to anybody at all, and I'll do as you say. Only love me, Mottke, love me!" And again she buried her face between his knees.

"If that's the case, listen to me!" He lifted her head and looked straight into her eyes. "Do you want to run away with me from this hurdy-gurdy troupe? Why should we stay here working our heads off for that old couple? You make all the money for them, and you haven't even a decent skirt. See how you're dressed."

"Mottke, Mottke love, my only one!" Tears came to her eyes and she grasped his hand, pressing it to her hot lips and her cold nose.

"Listen. I've thought the whole thing out. I'm going to leave them. If you want to, come along. I'll take care of you, and see that no harm comes to you from anybody."

"Look, Mottke love, I'll tell you something," whispered the girl. "There's a Jewish merchant from Warsaw that often puts up at this place. He's given me an address. He's been after me a long time, trying to convince me to come to him in Warsaw. He says he has a big business there, and that if I'll come I'll be able to make bunches of money. Here's the address right here. I carry it in my bosom." And she took

from between her breasts a crumpled card, and showed it to Mottke.

"Hide it, Mari. Hide it. It'll come in handy. And hear the rest of what I have to say. Go back into the hotel quietly, secretly, so that nobody will suspect you were over here with me. Make love to Kanarik again. Tell him that you want to run off with him, that you're afraid of me, that you hate me and love him, and that you want to elope. And I really want you to take him away from the old man. I must have it so."

"Mottke!" She looked closely at him, trying to discover the real reason for this strange request. Her eyes were filled with terror. She was afraid that he was

really sending her back to Kanarik.

"Don't be afraid. It's a secret. I can't tell it to you yet. I'll see whether you prove to be true, then I'll tell you everything. For the present, keep quiet and do as I say. Act very nicely to Kanarik and make love to him. And tell him that you're ready to elope with him. I've got to have it so for a special reason. Do as I say. Will you?"

"I'll do everything you say. Everything. But Mottke —?"

"Don't be afraid. It's got to be so."

The girl was silent, waiting for something.

"And now go back quietly, without a sound, so that nobody may see or know that you were here."

She looked beseechingly into his eyes, like a dog—and suddenly threw herself upon him, embracing him. "Mottke. . . . "

"No, not tonight," he replied, gently pushing her away. "Some other time, soon. Nobody must know that you were here tonight. Go back to the house."

"Yes, Mottke."

"That's the girl." And he embraced her, kissing her passionately, this time gazing into her eyes. "There now. Go in quietly, and do as I've told you."

"Yes, Mottke love," was Mari's reply, her whispering voice wafting through the air like a gentle zephyr. And her naked feet flashed in the starlight as she darted across the yard.

CHAPTER XI

KANARIK'S VENGEANCE UPON MOTTKE

A FEW weeks later, towards the beginning of autumn, Old Terach and his troupe came to Lovitch for the popular annual fair. Hither came other troupes of performers, all of whom camped in the open field behind the horse-market, where they pitched their canvas tents and put up their vans, in which they lived during the fair season. Their horses were left to graze together in the nearby woods. Before the tents burned little campfires, and in the smoke that came from the fires played half-naked children, while various animals grazed in their midst. Not far off sat the old hurdy-gurdymen, transacting their own affairs, and engaged in making exchanges: now swapping horses, now animals that performed in circuses, now human performers.

Here Mottke met the entire world of hurdy-gurdymen. All eyed him with evident curiosity as the latest addition

to their forces.

But Mottke felt little or no interest in them, for he had already resolved to abandon that life. Kanarik, on the contrary, seemed to be in his native element. He knew everybody on the grounds, and at the village tavern he sat drinking beer with his fellow acrobats.

On one of the first days of the yearly fair, before Old Terach's troupe had gone out onto the streets to perform, Mottke suddenly appeared in the hurdy-gurdymen's midst decked out anew from head to foot. He had purchased a new pair of boots, a bright white suit and a hat with a leather peak.

The men surrounded him at once and tried to learn how much he had paid for his new outfit. They whispered to one another, speculating as to where Mottke could have procured so much money. And Old Terach, sobbing aloud, grumbled into his stein of beer, "He did it all on my money, — my hard-earned money. The kid stole it, and I had to stand the loss."

It was already known among the hurdy-gurdy gentry that Mottke had stolen from "Kanarik's girl" the sum of eighty-five roubles, which she had "earned" from a Polish gentleman of Zhachlin. So that he was eyed with all the more curiosity, now that he wore a new suit purchased with that money. The young men looked at Kanarik and nudged him teasingly.

"For your money, Kanarik. Eh?"

"A fine figure you cut, Kanarik. Your girl does the work and another fellow gets the money."

"What do you say, newcomer?" began one, addressing Mottke. "Treat us to a drink?"

Mottke smiled and managed to extricate himself from the group. He called Mari, who seized a scarf, threw it over her, and together with him, walked off in the direction of the market-stalls.

Kanarik turned pale and bit his lips for helplessness. His throat contracted as tightly as if ropes were being pulled about it. Ever since Mottke had won the girl away from him he had nursed a deep grievance against the boy. His thoughts were focussed upon a single point: how best to get rid of the troublesome youngster.

But he could do nothing. Old Terach secretly favored Mottke, because he expected much of him; and moreover, the lad was no expense to the old man. Mottke was

"his," and he held the youngster at his mercy because of the passport. Kanarik, on the other hand, required a salary, and might leave whenever he pleased, thus seriously interfering with the business. It was as if needles were being stuck through his heart for Kanarik to look on while Mottke usurped his place, — to see how Mari stole over to the barn, and he — Kanarik — powerless all the while! For Mottke protected her, and he feared Mottke.

Yes, Kanarik must confess it: he feared Mottke. And now the brazen youngster was shaming him before his colleagues. His fellow acrobats know him so long for a performer, a leader in the profession, and along comes this little good-for-nothing, and takes away his girl right before everybody's eyes! He would have thrown himself upon Mottke when the lad had led Mari off to the market, only he restrained himself because he was planning a little "surprise party" for Mottke.

"Who is the kid? - Why, Kanarik, what's the

matter with you?"

"What? Are you going to stand for that from such a shrimp? 'Why don't you do something about it?" shouted Velvel Chvatt, the man that swallows swords and afterwards pulls chunks of fire out of his throat,—chief performer of Shlayme Mahmzer's troupe.

"Let's see what you can do, if you're so smart. Go

up against him yourself."

"Damn your soul!" interrupted Old Terach. "He's his mother's son all right, and one slap from him would knock you stiff." There was a note of pride in the old man's voice.

"What? That kid?"

"Yes. That kid," replied Old Terach calmly, his face beaming with pride.

"Where did you pick him up? Is he a good worker?" asked Shlayme Mahmzer, who was blind in one eye and considered himself the foremost in the profession.

"That, my dear brother, I discovered for myself. I knew that a certain little son of a certain mother was growing up into a youngster who'd know a thing or two, my brother. Why he'll down 'Bishka' yet, and I'm ready to bet you all kinds of money on that. Yes siree, I'm planning to take him to Warsaw and he'll down the Polish champion.' And as he spoke Old Terach ran one of his hands across his milk white hair, and with the other dangled the heavy gold chain that lay across his wide paunch.

"Don't believe the fairy tales he's telling you!" cried Kanarik. "The kid came running after us a couple of years ago, a little bastard, a dog in tatters, an orphan, a good-for-nothing."

"Well, I'll take him off his high horse," promised Velvel Chyatt.

"Why! Did you see what a swelled head the kid carries on his shoulders? We'll have to clip his wings for him," added the second hurdy-gurdyman of Shlayme Mahmzer's troupe,—the fellow who carries the organ on his stomach, a drum on his back, and] beats the cymbals above his head by pulling the string attached to his feet.

"He'll get his. He'll get his, all right," said Velvel Chvatt, waving his hand as if it were already an accomplished fact, and taking Kanarik aside in a corner, where he began to whisper to him.

Old Terach, however, continued to boast. "Just show me what you can do, that's all. I'm afraid he'll get the best of the whole bunch of you."

Meanwhile Mottke was taking Mari about the place,

from one stall to another, oblivious of the discussion about his prowess.

He stops before the baskets of colored ribbons that

are being sold by women upon their tables.

"Buy yourself some, Mari, do. Here, take this along, too." And he fills half her apron. "How much do I owe you, lady?"

Mottke does not haggle. He takes out a handful of silver coins from his new trousers and gives it to the vendor. Then he takes Mari over to a table where silks are on sale.

"Well, Mari. Do you see that shawl? Take it. It'll become you ever so much," says Mottke, paying for the shawl as he speaks.

Mari puts the shawl about her shoulders and with a happy expression she walks with Mottke from one table to the other. And now Mottke spies a pair of shoes with red heels.

"Mari, what do you say to a pair like that?"

No sooner said than paid for and taken. Thence Mottke took her to the stall where beads were on sale. For at the annual fair at Lovitch the handsomest of beads are sold, red and amber-colored, and the Venetian glass variety that is worn by fashionable women.

After bedecking Mari's neck with several necklaces Mottke took her to the woollen stores, and before be brought her home it was already evening. He was smoking a big cigar, his hands stuck in his trousers pockets, while the sides of his boots shone with the high polish. And Mari, her arms loaded with bundles of purchases, was chewing away contentedly at her bonbons. The friends of Kanarik were waiting for Mottke, and upon his arrival surrounded him.

"Treat us to a glass of beer, newcomer," suggested Velvel Chyatt.

"Sure. Nobody knows whether you're a genuine hurdy-gurdyman or not, or whether you can 'work.' We don't hear a word from you. In fact, we hardly see you," added Shlavme Mahmzer.

Mottke smiled at them good-naturedly.

"If you want a drink," he said, "then come into the tavern."

"There! Now you're talking! That's the boy!" And blind Shlayme thumped him on the head with the palm of his hand, so that Mottke saw stars.

Mottke looked at the fellow, in doubt as to whether the blow had been a friendly greeting or had been meant in earnest. But when he saw the smile on Shlavme's lips, he smiled himself, although the blow had hurt him.

"Won't a glass of beer turn your head?" asked Velvel

Chyatt.

Now Mottke understood that they were trying to pick a quarrel with him, as an excuse for giving him a beating, but he was ashamed to retreat and thus reveal that he was afraid. So he replied, "Don't worry about me. If you want some beer, come into the tavern." And he showed the way, advancing with long strides.

"Mottke, don't go. Don't go. They want to beat you up, Mottke!" cried Mari, running after the three

men.

"Just see how scared the girl is for his hide," said Shlayme to Velvel, turning back towards Mari. "Don't be afraid, my little kitten, nobody'll harm your darling."

"Go home." called Mottke to her. "Go home, they won't touch me. Don't be afraid."

But Mottke knew that he had fallen into a trap. However, it was too late to escape. To retreat, to show fear — this he did not dare. . . . He prepared for a struggle, and searched his pockets for a possible weapon, but found nothing. This disappointed him sorely, but not for a moment did he lose his courage. He called back again to Mari, who persisted in following him. "Go home this very minute. If you don't, I'll smash your face for you!"

"That's the way to talk to her. You're right! What

business is it of hers to mix into men's affairs?"

But Mari did not go home.

As the men entered the Gentile tavern, which was situated just beyond the town, Shlayme led Mottke into a private room. Here Mottke noticed Kanarik sitting at a table with a couple of his friends, drinking beer and talking excitedly, in a loud voice.

The moment they noticed Mottke there was a sudden hush, and all eyes were turned upon him. In a cheerful voice he ordered three glasses of beer, and together with Velvel and Shlayme sat down at a separate table. Not a word was spoken. Soon, however, came a voice from Kanarik's table.

"Is that the guy that takes away a girl from a brother hurdy-gurdyman? That's the chap, eh?"

"Yes. He's the one," replied a couple of others.

Mottke looked upon the table to see whether there was anything there with which he might defend himself. There was nothing. The beer had not yet been served. He thought of making a dash to the bar and seizing a beer-mug, but before he could make a move there arose in front of him a tall man, with a freckled face and bloodshot eyes, whom Mottke saw for the first time.

"Listen to me, you — you little shrimp. You dare to take away a girl from a hurdy-gurdyman, do you?"

"What of it? Is it any of your business?" asked

Mottke, calmly, although he had turned pale and his fingers trembled with a desire to seize some weapon.

"What of it? Well, I want an explanation!"

"An explanation? What do you mean?"

"This is what I mean!" And before Mottke could wink an eyelash, he received such a blow over the head that the blood began to run all over his face. His eyes and his ears were covered with it, so that he could neither see nor hear. In vain did Mottke try to spring upon his assailant, for as many men as there were in the place rushed upon him and rained down blow upon blow wherever they could strike. At first he was silent, ashamed to make an outcry. But when he saw that he was powerless to defend himself he began to cry in such an unearthly voice that he was heard at a great distance.

"Stop his mouth. He'll draw a crowd."

They seized him and threw him into a corner, where he lay so badly beaten up that he could not move. He had just enough strength to breathe. His face, his hat and the floor were bespattered with blood, and as he lay there, a huddled mass, it was hard to distinguish between the human being and the floor upon which he lay.

The young men had withdrawn from him, but Kanarik still stood over him, pulling off the new boots that Mottke had bought for himself that day. Kanarik wanted to remove the new suit, too, but it was covered with blood. He searched through its pockets and found some twenty odd roubles, which he divided among the fellows. He had wreaked vengeance for his insulted feelings, and had soothed the raging anger that had so long boiled within him.

"Let him alone. It's enough. He'll remember this all right," said Velvel Chvatt, pulling Kanarik away from Mottke.

Outside, Mari was standing at the door. She had heard

Mottke struggling within, and had begun to cry louder.

"Help! Help! Save him! Help!"

"Go out and shut her up. She'll have a crowd here in a minute."

Two of the men jumped through the window, seized the girl, gagged her mouth, and dragged her inside.

Mari struggled desperately. They tore off her skirt, ripped her waist, slapped her mercilessly across the cheeks and thrust her into the tavern.

Shlayme Mahmzer took her by the hand, looked into her eyes and said a few words to her that will not bear repetition. Then he led her before Mottke, who lay helpless in the corner, like a bloody rag, and spoke to her.

"Do you see how he lies there? Do you want to lie the same way? You'd better stick to Kanarik and give him the money that you earn." Then, pointing to Kanarik, — "This is your sweetheart, and you belong to him. And you hand over to him every kopeck you make, unless you want to earn the same black fate that this fellow met today."

But Mari did not listen to his words. Hardly had he released her when she rushed over to Mottke. With the pieces of her torn clothes she began to wipe the blood from his face, and wept over him.

"Mottke, dear Mottke, what have they done to you?"
"Get away from me. Away, I say, may the cholera take you," warned Mottke, barely able to snarl his words through his teeth.

But his warning was superfluous. One of the young men suddenly seized her braid and pulled her away from Mottke, shoving her with all his might over to Kanarik, who was sitting at a table, sulking. He thrust the girl away from him. And from behind she received two stinging blows upon either cheek.

CHAPTER XII

MOTTKE LEAVES THE TROUPE

THEY carried Mottke home "in a shroud," as Kanarik said, and placed him on the meadow before the tent. Old Terach cursed loudly and fumed with rage that they should have settled their score with Mottke just at this time, — the annual fair, when he could have made so much money from the youngster's performances. But he could do nothing, and for the nonce Kanarik held the upper hand. Not that Old Terach was much concerned about Mottke personally; "the dog had earned the stick," and Mottke needed to be taught respect for his older companions, and not to go about stealing other people's women.

Meanwhile Mottke lay helpless, without being able to move. Not a sound came from him except for his quiet breathing. They were afraid to call a doctor, as the hurdy-gurdy folk were not accustomed to admitting outsiders into their affairs lest their doings become known. So the women, with the "old witch" at their head, stanched the flow of his blood, patched up the cuts on his head with a healing salve and anointed his swollen body with a certain magic oil that they themselves made and with which they cured horses. In this condition Mottke lay for two days, motionless, his eyes closed, breathing softly. The women would bring him milk and water, which, part of the time, he would take, while at other times he would taste nothing; indeed, for a while it was a question whether he would pull through

at all. Old Terach began to threaten that he would call in the police, for they had killed his lad through professional jealousy and competition, because he was such a strong attraction. Kanarik, however, paid little or no attention to Old Terach's threats, for since he had taught Mottke his lesson he had not only reacquired his mastery over the girl, but had also become virtual leader of the troupe. Old Terach secretly feared Kanarik now, lest the youth assume the direction of the troupe and he—Old Terach—should be forced to work for Kanarik in his old age.

A few days later Mottke, without assistance, got up from his corner and crawled into the booth. He was now able to tend to his wounds himself, but he was still weak, and had to do just as Kanarik wished in all things. He was forced to look on while Kanarik ordered the girl about, and to see Mari kiss Kanarik before his very eyes. He saw, too, how Kanarik sent the girl to a certain place where she did not want to go, — how Kanarik beat her, and how she must yield to his will. But Mottke was silent.

During this silence, however, he was watching Kanarik's face with the closest of attention, as if he wished to impress very deeply upon his mind just how Kanarik looked. He watched every movement of Kanarik, as if he were bent upon imitating him to the life after Kanarik should be no more. For Mottke wished to remember Kanarik very well.

Meanwhile Mottke's health returned. He was soon able to go about without help, and to take little walks before the tent. Kanarik would scold him for walking about idle.

"Take the tambourine and go out into the street to earn some money!"

The "old witch" would intercede for Mottke. "Let him alone for a while. Can't you see that he's barely able to move?"

"Never mind. The cholera won't take him. Do you think he's going to get his board here for nothing? Let him earn his keep."

Mottke turned pale, bending as if he feared a blow from Kanarik; he said nothing but kept studying Kanarik's face.

And that night, when Mari stole over to him and kissed him, and wept upon his wounded head, Mottke whispered into her ear. "Go away, Mari. Go away. Kanarik might see you."

"Let him kill me, if he wants to. I won't go away."

"Remember what I told you, Mari. Do you remember?"

"I remember."

"Just keep quiet, and talk it into Kanarik to run away with you. Make him believe that you really love him and him only, and that you want to elope with him. Yes?"

"Yes, Mottke."

"And when he's ready to leave with you, come and tell me."

"Yes, Mottke."

"But remember to keep silent about it, Mari, if you want to save me and yourself, — Silence."

"Yes, Mottke."

"And now go away, go; and remember what I've told you."

"I'll remember."

Autumn was almost over, and it was no longer possible to travel about in the wagon-booth. It was too cold.

According to his regular winter custom, Old Terach turned towards a little village where a hurdy-gurdyman friend lived, and where his troupe was to hibernate. For the annual fair at Lovitch was the climax of the summer season, soon after which they went into winter quarters. But this year's fair had been a bitter disappointment to Old Terach, as Mottke was laid up with his wounds and Mari's work had been very unsatisfactory. The girl, in fact, had fallen from the wire several times, and refused to continue her exhibitions. Whereupon Old Terach in a fit of anger packed all the troupe's effects and hurried to leave the fair earlier than usual, since he hoped to include a few small towns before winter should arrive.

While the troupe was performing at one of these small towns Mottke learned that Kanarik had told Mari to gather her belongings, steal them out of the booth and give them to him to carry off. Mottke was happy; the long awaited time had come. He helped Mari to steal away her clothes, and told her to watch where Kanarik hid them. Kanarik carried Mari's belongings to the house of a Gentile in a nearby hamlet; from the Gentile he hired a horse and wagon, and arranged with Mari that on that same night, when he should whistle, she was to jump through the window of the booth. He would be waiting for her on the main road, and would take her to the Gentile's, whence they would ride to the nearby railroad station.

That same day Mottke took a walk in the direction of the hamlet whither Kanarik had carried Mari's belongings. He surveyed the lay of the land and discovered that in the woods nearby, in a small depression, ran a narrow, black stream amidst thick shrubbery, brambles and sedge. Here he stopped, lost for a while in deep

thought. He picked out a spot that was almost hidden by the bushes, and marked it down for future remembrance. This was not difficult, as a pile of stones lay in front of a tree close by. For a long time he considered the tree, the heap of stones, the road, and then went over to the stream to look into it once more. The bed of the stream must have been covered with a slimy undergrowth, because blades of wild water-grass floated about on the surface of the water. He noticed, too. that at the water's edge grew a profusion of rushes and tall grass, and began to think of a certain project that was not very pleasant to contemplate. He whistled a tune and then returned to the hurdy-gurdy folk bent and sad, and as weak as if he still suffered from the beating he had received at the hands of Kanarik's gang. He scratched his head as if perplexed at some personal problem and mumbled something under his nose.

"What's the trouble, Mottke?" asked Old Terach, who was sitting upon a chest before the wagon, warming himself in the late autumn sun.

"I'm going to leave you," answered Mottke, softly.

"What? Where are you going?"

"What's the difference? I can't perform any more, anyway. Those fellows finished me, all right. Why should I hang about here, eating you out of house and home? I want to leave."

"But where will you go? Who'll ever have any use for a corpse like you? Just see what they've done to the poor fellow."

"I'll go to the city and learn a trade. I'll become a shoemaker, just like my father. At any rate, I can't remain with you people."

It did not take a minute for the news to spread throughout the encampment: Mottke was going to leave Old

Terach's troupe. The "old witch" had come out of the booth, her face covered with soot from her work at the stove. Upon hearing that Mottke was to leave she burst into tears and commenced to wipe her face with her dirty apron, thus spreading the soot all the more; she cursed Kanarik and his gang for the punishment they had visited upon Mottke and bemoaned Mottke himself as if he were already dead.

A sadness came over Old Terach. He could see that the end of his days was approaching: Kanarik would be his master, or worse still, might abandon him in his old age and leave him and his wife to shift for themselves. What could he do? He could not afford to quarrel now with Kanarik on Mottke's account, and thought that with Mottke out of the way perhaps Kanarik would be less restless. The girl would be his once more, and all would be as it had been before.

Old Terach woke from his reverie and called out to Mottke. "Well, if you've made up your mind to go I'll not hold you back. But I haven't any passport for you. I need it for another chap that I'll get to take your place. I can't give you any money, either. I paid eighty-five roubles for you, which the girl stole from that Polish fellow. But here's a few gulden for you, through, to carry you through the hard times that you'll strike at first, — and see that you learn to make your own way." The old man took some silver coins out of his pocket and gave them to Mottke.

Mottke took the money and went into the wagon to pack up his things.

"Hey, old lady," called Old Terach, "give him a couple of my old shirts." The hurdy-gurdyman pitied Mottke.

When Kanarik heard that Mottke was leaving them,

he was more content than ever. To him it seemed that nothing better could have occured to further his plan of eloping with Mari. For Old Terach would not know with whom the girl had run off, and would be in doubt as to which of the two men to hunt for. So that, with a voice in which satisfaction at Mottke's departure mingled with a certain pity for the boy, Kanarik called to the old woman inside the booth, "Give him an old shirt of mine, too, and a pair of old trousers! I pity the kid, devil take him!"

Meanwhile Mottke packed his clothes, including the gifts of his former associates, and made a little bundle of them. He beckoned to Mari, who was lying on a heap of bed-clothes, looking into a mirror as she combed her hair.

"I'll be in the woods," he whispered. "If you hear me whistle, just run into the forest. That's all. Agreed?"

"Agreed," nodded Mari, and combed her hair more light heartedly than ever, beginning to sing in a merry voice, like a cheery little bird:

Thousands have I loved,
Of all the youths I've met.
Thousands have I forgotten,
Yet one I can't forget.

Mottke came out of the wagon with a bundle slung over his shoulders, affecting weakness in all his movements, his head bent sadly. The old woman came to the steps of the wagon and looked after him with tears in her eyes. The old man, too, repressed a tear between the thick hairs of his eye-lashes, and spoke with a sob in his voice. "Well, good-by, Mottke, and be sure to mingle with respectable people. Become a shoemaker; maybe you'll be a somebody some day."

Kanarik threw a half-rouble piece over to Mottke,

saying aloud, "Here, take it."

Mottke, however, let the coin lie where it had fallen and took a sharp last look at Kanarik. And in Mottke's glance there was a deep gravity, as if something were on his mind. He turned and took the road to the hamlet.

Mari thrust her head through one of the wagon windows. For a long time as the lad trudged along he could catch snatches of her Russian song:

Thousands have I forgotten, Yet one I can't forget.

Now he knew who that "one" was, and he smiled. He was soon lost to sight, and turned into the woods.

CHAPTER XIII

HOW MOTTKE BECAME KANARIK

OTTKE penetrated into the forest, sought out the tree which he had marked previously, and lav down nearby. The sun had already begun to set; it gilded the tree-tops, and a mist rose from the water. Mottke felt ill at ease. His mind was crowded with all manner of thoughts, but only with such as had no relation at all to the deed before him. He longed for his mother, and would gladly have known what she was doing at that particular moment. The woods, the meadow and the stream, recalled his early years, when he lived upon the fields of his native town. And he was happy that at last he was free of the hurdy-gurdy life. The matter that had brought him to the forest was forgotten, for a time, completely, and Mottke began to feel as care-free as in the days of his youth. He munched the bread that Old Terach had given him for his journey, and it was appetizing. He wanted to make a little camp-fire, but immediately changed his mind, as somebody could easily discover him that way. Then he went over to the water's edge and thought of bathing for a while, but one look at the grass floating in the stream recalled unpleasant thoughts. . . . All notion of bathing disappeared; he walked back and hid among the trees.

Night fell, and the ground became too damp for Mottke to lie upon in comfort. In the forest darkness his thoughts turned to Kanarik, to Mari, and to the fateful approaching moment. He became grave. He recalled that he had no home, no place whither to go, and that Kanarik must be done away with that very night. He no longer felt enmity against Kanarik, but looked upon him rather as an obstacle that must be removed; this must be done so that Mottke might have a home, a place to go to, — not have to remain in the damp forest.

He commenced to feel an utter indifference to Kanarik: he had never seen him, never heard him, - never fought with him for Mari. Kanarik was merely an object that must be seized and thrown into the water, covered with stones, so that nobody would ever suspect that here or anywhere else lav a Kanarik. And in order that Kanarik should be unable to make an outcry and attract a crowd of people. Mottke must stab him under the arm. suddenly, so that he shouldn't even have time to utter a sound. All this must be done cleverly, quietly, so as to arouse not the slightest suspicion, and so as to have Old Terach and the "old witch" imagine that Kanarik still lived, and had gone off somewhere with the girl. Let the old woman curse Kanarik for it all, and meanwhile he would be lying deep in the stream, buried among the rushes, and Mottke would be on the train, speeding towards Warsaw, with the girl by his side, his pockets full of money, a passport all his own, and known henceforth to the world as Kanarik.

He pulled out of his boot the knife that Mari had once presented to him; he had kept it hidden up to that day in the horse's collar. It was a Caucasian dirk with an ivory handle, and lay in a sheath. It was by this time half rusty. Without any particular motive Mottke stuck the knife into the earth and began to rub off the particles of rust. He felt that unless the knife should

shine in the light of the stars he would not be able to stab Kanarik with it. He was thus engaged rubbing it energetically against the earth when suddenly the call of a bird echoed through the woods. He stopped rubbing the blade and listened to the bird, trying to discover what it was, — a cuckoo or a woodpecker that taps with its beak against the bark of a tree. . . .

He began to feel cold, and thought that it must be very late already. It was a murky September night, and it seemed to Mottke that the forest was filled with hordes of strange night spirits. Not that he feared them, or that he was much concerned at their presence; he was simply vexed that time dragged along so slowly, and that Mari and Kanarik were so late in coming. His anger rose against the girl, for to him she alone was to blame for the delay. It never occured to him that Kanarik could have any share in the blame, for to Mottke Kanarik had already ceased to exist as a living creature capable of being delayed or being blamed for any mishap. He went out several times to the road. The sky was overcast by clouds, and only by the light of the stars that now and then broke through could the road be discerned for any distance. The darkness was so complete for the most part that it seemed the air was filled with a strange substance that hid everything from sight. Mottke could make out that not a soul was upon the road, not a wagon. It was but a narrow rustic side path, of plowed sand, and led only to the village. True, he had heard a wagon creak by just before night had fallen, — a peasant had been driving his cow home. But after the sun had gone down he heard nothing more.

Suddenly his heart began to beat violently. It seemed that he heard voices of people who were walking at a fast pace and talking loudly. He scurried back to

the woods, lav down under the tree and waited. Through the fog the voices gradually became plainer, and he soon recognized the voice of Mari. She was talking quite loudly, on purpose that Mottke should be sure to hear their approach. Soon he made out Kanarik's voice. The youth was saying, "Don't talk so loudly. We might be overheard." And to Mottke it was a wonder that Kanarik could talk at all. Mottke lay breathless in his place: the footsteps and the voices seemed now very close to him indeed. Soon there sped past him, as if on wings, a black shadow, and he almost forgot what he must do. However, he soon recalled his prearranged signal with Mari, and gave a low whistle. He was about to whistle again, more strongly, when he heard a rustle, then Kanarik's voice, as clear as if the speaker stood before him. "Where are you going, Mari? Who whistled then?"

A black spot loomed up before Mottke, and to him that black spot was already a dead object. The black spot cried out: "Oh, mother!"

At the word "mother" Mottke was seized with a trembling, wondering at the same time that the black spot could utter the word. Suddenly Mottke was seized by the throat; the clutch lent him new strength and courage for the combat.

Somebody now threw a shawl over the head of the dark form, and an outcry was stifled, half by the trees of the forest and half by the cloth. Now that the form could no longer emit any human sounds like "Oh, mother!" but could only gurgle a wild, indistinct sound, Mottke could thrust the dagger into the soft warm form as if it were a dead thing. He even wondered that from the form began to gush a warm, thick stream that covered his hand and gave him a sensation of pleasure.

He had no time to think of all this, but it ran through his mind like a dream. Soon the dark form was unable even to make the wild, indistinct gurgling, and toppled over in a heap. It was dead.

Now Mottke came to himself. He groped about for the bundle that Kanarik had carried on his shoulders when he was attacked, and gave it to Mari to hold. Then he grabbed Kanarik by one of his legs and dragged him over to the water's edge. Here he went through the dead man's pockets, but found nothing. He loosened the cloth that had been thrown over Kanarik's head, tried hard not to look into the victim's face and tore open his shirt. Around his neck was tied a little bag which contained some money and a passport wrapped in a little piece of paper. The passport delighted Mottke far more than the money. Having found it. he now hunted out the stones that he had prepared on the previous night, tied Mari's shawl about Kanarik's neck, loaded it with the stones, and rolled the body into the slimy stream. Thus disappeared Kanarik from the world.

Mottke washed himself in the stream and told Mari to do likewise. Then he took off his torn coat and his old shoes, made a bundle of them, filled them with pebbles and threw them into the water. In Kanarik's bundle he found his own new boots of which he had been robbed by Kanarik at the tavern, and also Kanarik's new suit. He dressed himself by the light of the stars, using as mirror that same stream beneath which Kanarik now reposed forever. He put on the new suit and the red velvet vest, in which he placed Kanarik's watch and thick silver chain. After dressing, Mottke took a couple of large stones and threw them into the water directly over the spot where Kanarik lay; then he

shouldered Kanarik's bundle, took the girl by the hand and walked off.

"Remember now," spoke Mottke sternly, "that I am Meyer Aaron Kanarik, and you're to call me by that name henceforth. Do you hear? Don't forget!"

"Yes. And my name is Hannah Dvayre Silber-

stein."

"What? Since when?"

"Kanarik bought a passport for me from the hurdygurdy people and gave it to me today when I left with him. Remember, now!"

It was a cold night, and Mari wore nothing but a light tulle jacket and a thin skirt. Her shawl had been used to weight down Kanarik's head. She felt the warmth of Mottke's body, which was heated from excitement, and she nestled closely to him. He embraced her with one of his arms and pressed her closely to him. The shiver that ran through Mari because of the coldness of the night sent a refreshing chill through Mottke's veins. Soon they were both nestled together as closely as possible in the damp grass behind a tree; the dew moistened their half-naked bodies, and the night wind cooled their warm, youthful blood. Mari clung to Mottke like a frightened orphan-bird, seeking the shelter of his strong young breasts.

"Mottke, Mottke my only one," she entreated, "beat me, trample over me with your heels, and I'll kiss your hands for it. Do whatever you wish to me. I'll obey you in everything, — everything."

"What's my name?" Mottke struck her between the eyes with his fist. "What's my name? Have you

forgotten?"

"Ka-na-rik! My sweetheart, Ka-na-rik!"
In the stream not far distant, somebody moved. The

water trembled and rippled restlessly among the grass and the rushes, as if someone had awakened and looked out of it at the sound of the name Kanarik in the forest stillness.

But neither Mottke nor Mari heard the trembling of the water. Hand in hand they were soon hastening with impatient steps to the nearest railroad station, where they were to take a train for Warsaw, there to hunt out the address written upon the card that Mari kept hidden between her breasts.







PART III

CHAPTER ONE

OLD WARSAW

IN one of the corners of Warsaw there yet remains standing a part of the original medieval city. Here one looks upon high, narrow, antiquated dwellings that were erected by our great-great-grandfathers hundreds of years ago. Each house is built into the next, and it would seem that if one of them were touched the whole row would topple over. There are no yards, no windows; there is no light within; each structure is a veritable labyrinth. Long, lugubrious corridors wind in secret passages from one room to another, and only the old dwellers themselves, born and brought up in the place. know their way about. Were one to come into a house of this kind he would imagine that he had blundered upon an ancient monastery whose walls reeked of the Inquisition; terror would descend upon him from the high arched beams and the grave, dark walls, and he would be rooted to the spot in bewilderment.

Not only the houses, but the entire old section of the city conveys the same impression. In the center of the market-place, in an old, dried-up fountain that was once the pride of Warsaw, stands the city-nymph, half woman and half fish, symbol of the famous town. About the nymph, which is suggestive of Warsaw's seductive women rather than of the city itself, are clustered the closely built houses, which stand like so

many ancient grandfathers, lank and haggard as consumptives. All are painted different colors, and still bear upon them the various signs of the medieval guilds. On the market place stand vans and stalls which are, as befits their location, the headquarters for cast-off wares. Here you may buy anything from an old, outworn fork to a pair of second-hand shoes. More than one comes to the market in tatters and leaves with a pair of shoes that were sewed five years before in Paris, a coat that was made in a New York sweatshop and a hat that was originally purchased in a Berlin store. And all this he has bought with small change, and has had enough left for a dinner.

In one of these houses, which bears the proud name "The Anchor", and which furthermore is decorated with a shield bearing a ship painted green on a field of red. is located the Warsaw Café. At night the shield is illuminated by two red lanterns; upon three or four chairs that are placed outside of the tea-house regularly sit girls, young and old, clad in a sort of negligée, white jackets and white petticoats, short for the most part, which permit a generous vew of their red, white or black stockings and their low-cut shoes, turned in the Warsaw fashion. Some let their hair fall loosely over their shoulders, while others gather it in red ribbons. A few of the elder and stouter women leave their kaftans unbuttoned, thus allowing at times a glimpse of a wellrounded breast. These sit heavily and motionless before the café; the younger and better-looking, however. run about the walk, let their hair fly in the air, showing freely their bosoms and strong, shapely legs that kick from under their short dresses. Thus they caper about, seizing the arms of passers-by.

At night the whole street comes to life; before numerous old houses burn red lanterns that shine upon the signs of the bygone guilds. Before many a door of the same type of tea-house sit groups of girls dressed in the same costumes, while countless young men, - and old ones, too, - both civilians and government officials of all ages and in various uniforms, crowd the streets of the ancient quarter. Often a hurdy-gurdy will stop to play before one of the houses and the children commence to dance to the tune; oftener still, the sound of a harmonica floats on the evening breeze. This comes from one of the watchmen, who is sitting in front of a house embracing his girl with one hand and holding the harmonica to his mouth with the other, playing a melancholy Polish mazurka while "watching the house" lest robbers — and unannounced guests — should pay a visit. He permits entrance only to the girls and their "friends" with whom they disappear into the dark labyrinths of the house.

All this at night. But now it is day. The market-place is thronged with merchants and customers. Here stands a soldier selling ryebread; there, another offering government linen. Further along is a Jew peddling umbrellas and second-hand collars, and at his side an old Jewess with a collection of cast-off women's clothing. The place seethes with bargain-hunters, and no sooner is an article bought than it is put on. Sometimes barter replaces purchase; for a loaf of bread or a cigarette one leaves behind a garment that has seen its best days; very often one exchanges his only coat for a drink of whiskey, and continues to swap his clothes, one by one, until the limit of prescribed decency is reached.

In the old Warsaw Café everything is still. The large samovar boils lonesomely in its corner, while the

flies, undisturbed, eat the cheese and cakes and other dainties in the show-window. In the café itself there is no one to be seen. There is an ante-room, however, without windows, that leads to the rear room: from the windows of the latter there comes a pale, nocturnal light, sufficient to reveal a long table at which stands a girl kneading dough. About her are seated several girls, or women perhaps, drinking tea. Some are still in their night clothes, although it is now long past noon; one in a chemise, the other in a night-gown, still another with her hair loose letting it dry in the air. The room is redolent with cheap perfume. The girl from Lovitch. (the "Lovitcherin") has brought down from her room a half dozen batiste chemises, some tablecloths and handkerchiefs from Zhurodov that she has been hording in her wardrobe, and is showing the others the beautiful letters in which her name has been embroidered. The girls look at the work, try to guess what the owner paid for it, as the handkerchiefs and tablecloths are passed from one hand to the next.

The news that the Lovitcherin had made some new purchases tempted the proprietress out of her kitchen, where she had been busy preparing dinner for her children who would soon be coming home from Hebrew school. She came from the kitchen with a face as red as fire, — a stout, obese, typical Warsaw mother, with a fleshy neck and fat, stubby fingers. With a woman's instinct she looked over the bright new tablecloths and handkerchiefs with evident pleasure, for like the virtuous Warsaw landlady she was, she could not be indifferent to linens. The women spread the tablecloths over the table, the benches and the beds in the room and tried again to guess the price of the goods.

"What are you going to do with all those linens,

Dobrish?" asked the landlady, addressing the Lovitcherin with an ill-restrained smile visible in the fleshy creases of her round face. She winked to one of the other girls who had, in jest or through envy, passed an adverse opinion upon the purchases. "You've got so much linen already rotting away in your trumk. You don't ever use them."

"Never mind. Let them rot. There'll come a time yet when I'll have use for them."

"I hope so, indeed," replied the proprietress of the Warsaw Café, with the same smile as before. She was about to return to the kitchen when the voice of Gnendel the Zhachlinerin called her back.

"Just see how concerned she is when one of us buys herself some new things. One would imagine that they alone had the right to buy things to put away for the future and start in housekeeping with. It's all right, Dobrish. Use them in the best of health."

The proprietress of the café was afraid of Gnendel, for in the first place the girl had a sharp tongue, and in the second, a new café had just opened in the same neighborhood, thus threatening serious competition. Girls from other resorts had already begun to go to the new place.

"Why!" replied the proprietress, "I didn't mean anything. By all means, buy as much as you please. What are you picking on me for? Let her buy out the whole store." And she disappeared into the kitchen.

"Really," began Yentele, "what do you intend to do with all those tablecloths and napkins? Do you expect to make use of them? Ah, me. Now, I like a pretty hat or a nice tippet, — that's my style. But embroidered linens? That's for one of your respectable women

that has a husband and children and a home, not for one of us."

The girls smiled, for they knew well Dobrish's weakness for buying household goods with her money, instead of spending it for dresses and shoes. Whatever money she could extract from her chance acquaintances she would proceed at once to invest in household articles, although she knew they would mildew in her trunk together with the others. Perhaps she cherished a secret hope that some day she would have use for all these things. — when she would marry and lead a respectable life, which is the hope of most of her kind. Perhaps this hope had long since disappeared, and it was merely a sort of game that she played, for when she was alone she would often take out her linen, clean up the room, as if she were married and were expecting her husband home from work any moment. At such times she would spread a new tablecloth upon the table, put the new copper samovar on the stove, hang up her pictures on the wall and spread a silk embroidered coverlet over the bed. When evening came, and she must prepare for guests, she would pack the things back into the chest. . . .

The conversation of the girls was soon interrupted by the entrance of a little eight-year old girl. She was wrapped in a large shawl, half of which dragged after her on the floor, while the other half revealed the head of a small child which she carried, and which looked more like some little animal than anything else. In the other hand she carried a tin tea-pot; advancing, and in a voice that came from a stuffed nose and a sore throat she said in the true Warsaw sing-song fashion, "Give me two kopeck's worth of boiled water."

"Channele, Channele, there's a customer here," shouted one of the half-dressed girls into the kitchen.

From the rear room there entered a young girl of eighteen or nineteen summers, dressed in ordinary garb. But surrounded as she was by the lightly clad, painted women of the dubious profession, the girl whom they had called Channele, in her simple waist and smoothly combed, braided hair, and her fresh cheeks unstained by rouge or powder, seemed to stand out as a strange, unnatural creature. Channele went into the café and took the tin tea-pot from the arms of the child and filled it with hot water from the boiling samovar.

"How is your mother?" asked Gnendel of the little girl.

"I don't know. My mamma is sick in bed and my papa's not home," replied the girl in her hoarse, childish sing-song.

"Give her a little cheese-cake for me, Channele," said Gnendel. "Here's the four-kopeck piece for it." And she took a purse from her stocking and placed a coin upon the table.

Channele went over to the show-window, and at once there was a confused buzzing of flies that she had brushed away with her hand. She took a cheesecake and gave it to the little girl who accepted it without saying anything.

"Give her one for me, too," came from another of the girls.

"And for me, too," came a chorus of voices from the ante-room. Channele filled the child's shawl with as many cakes as it could hold.

"Take care that you don't fall with the baby," cried Gnendel to the child as she left.

"Watch where you walk," admonished others,

"I pity the poor cigarette-maker," continued Gnendel the Zhachlinerin. "This is the seventh month that his wife is ill, and he has a house full of kids. There's the benefits of marriage for you." And with her hand-kerchief she wiped off yesterday's powder from her face.

"But not every man has such hard luck as the cigarette-maker", objected Dobrish from her corner,

where she was putting her linen in order.

At this point the door of the café was swung open with a bang against the wall and two little boys, whose close resemblance stamped them at once as twins, dashed in, swinging their hands and their coattails, throwing their hats in the air and slapping their books noisily.

"Ma, we want to eat!" they shouted together.

"Come here, Shlaymele," called Dobrish to one of them.

"No, Shlaymele, better come to me," cried Gnendel. "Here's a two-kopeck piece for you if you'll come to me," and she took a coin from the purse in her stocking.

"But I'll buy you a little knife if you'll come to me."

The boy stood between the women, perplexed, his book still in his hand, his little face red from running. He looked at the women with his sparkling eyes and could not decide which to choose, — the two kopecks or the pen-knife.

"Shlaymele, come in here and have your dinner," cried Channele, suddenly seizing him by the hand and dragging him towards the kitchen.

"Just look, will you," sneered Gnendel, scratching herself under her breast. "She's afraid I'll bite a piece of flesh off him."

The boy looked back at the two-kopeck piece in Gnendel's hand and left the room unwillingly.

The tea-house, however, was soon disturbed again. This time there entered two strange men; from their refined appearance and the manner of their dress it was easily to be seen that they did not belong to the café's regular visitors. The girls withdrew to a corner, and some of them began to fix their hair and arrange their gowns, eyeing the newcomers with curiosity. The proprietress herself, coming in from the kitchen, began to tidy herself when she beheld the men. She turned pale and felt somewhat frightened, but a moment later a familiar figure came through the door, and Red Velfil, in his hoarse bass voice called into the dark room, "Is Kanarik here?"

At the sound of Red Velfil's voice the proprietress and the girls were reassured. For he was the owner of the brothel in the same building.

"Yes," they replied. "Here he is sleeping." And they pointed to a corner of the café that was shrouded in complete darkness. "Kanarik! Kanarik!" they called. "Somebody wants you!"

A tall youth rose wearily from a couch and emerged from the darkness; the polished legs of his boots flashed even in the dim light of the room. His black hair was dishevelled and his face wore a sour expression; but it revealed none the less the features of one who was fresh from a sound sleep, — a sly look, and a short black moustache. He rubbed his eye nonchalantly and looked about him in surprise, as if he had suddenly fallen into the place. Then, in a young, clear voice that came evidently from a strong chest, he asked, "Who wants me?"

His voice was the voice of Mottke the Vagabond.

CHAPTER II

THE "DIRECTOR"

K ANARIK looked sharply at the two men whom Velfil had brought to the café. One of them, the older, was short and rather thin, with a pair of black sparkling eyes that looked upon everything and everybody with scorn and suspicion, in the manner of one who is sure of himself and devil take everybody else. Between his teeth, which were stained from habitual smokting, was a thick cigar. He coughed hoarsely and spat out every few minutes. But to make up for this he sparkled with diamonds. A harp of jewels in his necktie betokened that he served the muse of art; his short, bony fingers shone with diamond rings, and on his little finger, glittered the largest of all, set in platinum. Through force of habit he ran his little finger up and down across his flaming red vest, looking with half-closed eyes at the sparkling stone.

The second man was much younger, — a handsome fellow, dressed in a costly suit, similarly bedecked with jewels, although they were of smaller size then those of his friend. He kept curling his short moustache, which was cut in the English fashion.

The younger man acted with great deference toward the other and never spoke without addressing him as "Mr. Director."

Mottke considered them both in silence, and began to feel uncomfortable that two gentlemen of such quality should want to transact any business with him, but he did not reveal his surprise. He looked angrily at Velfil for having called him, and asked, with his eyes, "What do you want?"

"Listen, Kanarik. Here's a good business deal for you. If you'll be smart you'll make a neat little pile on it. But you've got to be clever and know how to go about it."

"What kind of deal? Speak up!" answered Kanarik. He thought that he had revealed no uneasiness, but his concern at the visit of the two men and his curiosity as to their purpose were plainly evident in his nervous gestures.

The "director" looked at Kanarik through the corner of his eyes, which he squinted as if he would like to size up the man at a glance. Then he coughed and spat out as if to show that he had assayed Kanarik's worth. "There's no place to sit down," he said, looking about the tea-house scornfully. "What can I get here, I'd like to know?"

"Channele, Channele, come here," called Velfil.

"Channele, Channele," called another voice, within.

Channele, with a towel thrown across her shoulder, soon came in, and looked with surprise and no little fear at the refined people who had come to pay the café a visit. Her fright brought a blush to her youthful cheeks and a nervous sparkle to her dark eyes.

"Bring us a few chairs. Can't you see who is here?" said Velfil, rubbing his flat nose with delight and pointing to the two gentlemen

The young girl cleaned off a table in a moment and placed two chairs before it. The director, with the same two eyes that had just sought to bore through Kanarik, fixed his glance upon Channele as she moved about her work. Then, after he had sat down at some distance from the table, he called out, in a good-natured voice, "Well, let's have a bottle of good champagne, of the best vintage, mark you."

"Do you keep champagne, Channele?" asked Velfil

jocosely, trying to humor the director.

Channele looked at the men and wondered what they meant.

"What shall I bring you?" she asked angrily, blushing.

"Let us have some of your tea and cheese-cakes," said the director's young assistant in a voice of command.

"Who is that girl?" asked the director, looking at the large diamond ring upon his little finger as if it was to the diamond, rather than to Channele, that he referred.

"That's the owner's daughter. Her mother is the

proprietress of the café."

"So? Such a girl to be roaming around God's world, doing nothing. That's a shame," said the director, as if to himself.

"Yes. She is a respectable daughter, and her mother watches her as closely as the apple of her eye," continued Velfil.

"Well, let her watch, then. But what are we sitting here for?" asked the director, impatiently.

"Say, Kanarik," began Velfil, pointing at the director.

"Do you know who this man is?"

"No, I don't," replied Mottke, angrily, disturbed. The company in which he found himself, and to which he was not at all accustomed, made him ill at ease.

"He's the director of the café chantant called 'The

Aquarium'. Do you know what that means?"

"No, I don't," repeated Mottke sourly.

"Well, this gentleman's place is patronized by such people as the chief of police. The highest officials of the police department come to him. Do you know what that means?"

"Only the chief of police, you say?" interrupted the handsome young assistant. "And what about the governor? All the higher army officers, and the colonels, — in fact, the whole military staff, come to 'The Aquarium' to drink champagne and see our dancers perform."

The director who formed the chief topic of the conversation between Mottke and Velfil stared indifferently at the diamond ring on his little finger.

"The leading actresses work at this director's place. The best dancers in the world. Do you understand? And any woman that dances at his place gets such a big reputation all over that she can earn thousands of roubles. Why, the biggest singers come to Warsaw and beg him for a chance to appear in his café, just for the sake of the name it'll bring them!"

Meanwhile Channele brought in tea and cakes upon a platter and placed them upon the table before the guests.

"Ah. So the champagne's arrived?" asked the director, looking at Channele again with his squinting eyes until she blushed under his gaze and nearly spilled the glasses of tea with her trembling hands.

"Such a girl to be roaming about God's world, doing nothing. It's a shame," said the director once more to himself, taking from his pocket a gold cigarette-case set with diamonds and emblems and offering cigarettes to the others.

"Listen, Kanarik. The director has heard that your Spanish woman can walk the tight-rope and do tricks on it. He wants to see her." "This girl here, the owner's daughter, is good enough for me," blurted the director suddenly.

"But you haven't seen the other one, Mr. Director," said his young friend, who was an expert in this line. "She is excellent. A fiery brunette, of genuine Spanish

blood, and fresh as a daisy."

"I'm an honest man," Velfil was saying to Mottke. "You see this gentleman came to me and began to talk about that Spanish girl," he explained, pointing to the young man, "so I told him right away that she was one of your women, and that you had brought her into my place. 'He had a fight with Shlayme Shlossenhacker on account of her,' I said to him. 'He's got more than one thrust in the ribs because of her. She belongs to Kanarik,' I told him. 'She's his. What's mine is mine and what's his is his. I don't like any scenes or any duels.' It's your woman, so they've got to talk to you. The director can make a famous lady out o her and you can make a pile of money. Do you want to sell her to the director?"

Mottke listened in silence. He was thinking deeply of something, and pulled at his moustache nervously. Towards the director he felt a growing anger, and would have liked nothing better than to knock his eyes out for him. Just why, he could not tell. He did not at all like the way in which the director followed Channele's movements. For, although Mottke was by now a recognized trafficker in women and looked upon them as so much merchandise he knew the difference between the kind of women he mingled with and Channele, who was an innocent girl. Hence the director's words displeased him greatly.

"Take your time, don't run, let me first have a look

at her. How do I know what she's like?" said the director indifferently.

"The director may see her at once. Where is she, Kanarik?"

"She's upstairs in her room" replied Mottke, sullenly.

"Then why should we stand here prattling? Come, let's have a peep at this Spanish woman from Berditchev," urged the director impatiently.

"Channele, Channele," called Velfil.

The girl came in.

The director took out a long, thick wallet, fingered it for a while and finally inquired whether she had change for a hundred rouble note.

The group burst into laughter at his question. Then he asked whether she could break a twenty-five rouble note, at least. At last, however, he managed to find a rouble, which he placed into the girl's hand with a sharp glance from his squinting eyes. He refused to take any change.

"A girl like that to roam about God's earth, doing nothing," he repeated to himself. It seemed that he was pleased by the cleverness of his own remark, and in the manner of conceited folk he had a habit of repeating his bon mots.

They all arose, prepared to go to the Spanish tightrope walker, but Mottke remained seated.

"What are you sitting for, Kanarik? Aren't you coming along?"

"Come here a second, Velfil," beckoned Mottke, calling the owner of the resort into a corner.

"Who's that man?" he asked, pointing to the director.

"I told you: he's the director of the café chantant they call 'The Aquarium.'"

"I don't know, - director or no director, he's not

at all to my taste. If he wants to go up and see the Spanish girl, let him go. It's public upstairs, and open to everybody. But if he tries any funny business here with Channele, — do you hear — he'll never leave this place alive!"

"What have you taken into your head, Kanarik?

Are you crazy?"

"Never mind. I've kept my eyes open. Now he

can go. I'll wait here."

"Maybe he doesn't want me to go upstairs," said the director. "Come, Krumashatka," he continued, addressing the young man by the name by which he was known throughout the underworld. Krumashatka, young, tall and handsome, was a strong fellow, and accompanied the director virtually as his bodyguard.

The director, Krumashatka and Velfil went upstairs to see the tight-rope walker. The stairs were in almost total darkness, and the director used his pocket flashlight. Here they encountered little children playing in the dim light; a door opened somewhere, and a woman stuck out her head, while from the room came the sounds of a crying infant.

Soon they reached another door, and Velfil entered first. A moment later he called the other two men in.

They entered a small room whose windows and door were hung with dusty, red velvet curtains. On a little couch sat a girl in a batiste nightgown puffing at a cigarette, manicuring her nails and whistling. She looked up at the newcomers with an air of puzzled surprise.

The director squinted his eyes and looked sharply at the brunette, scrutinizing her with deliberation, in much the same manner as he was accustomed to eyeing the diamond which he wore on his little finger. From his expression it appeared that the girl was admirably suited to his purpose, for, as usual when he was pleased with anything, he stuck out his little tongue and licked the corners of his mouth, while his eyes squinted harder than ever. He pulled out his golden cigarette-case and passed the cigarettes around.

"This is our Spanish brunette, Mr. Director," spoke Velfil, pointing to the girl with undisguised pride.

When the girl saw how the director watched her through the corners of his narrow eyes she felt a queer sort of embarrassment. She blushed slightly, and brushed aside the locks of black hair that had fallen across her neck, bringing them together in a knot which she fastened with hair-pins.

"I see, I see," answered the director, passing the cigarettes around once more.

"Can you walk a tight-rope, Nina?" asked Velfil.

"Certainly. I toured the provinces with a circus."

"And can you dance Spanish dances?"

"I don't know. They once taught me how," laughed the girl.

"Oh, she'll know how all right. We'll teach her that. Just let her stand up and walk about the room."

The girl, who was accustomed to different treatment and different requests from the sort of guests that visited her, was now beginning to be frightened at the queer questions and the aloofness of the two men, and blushed like an innocent maiden before strangers. Through long habit in obeying men's requests, however, she obeyed this time, too, arising and walking across the room.

The director and his assistant stood in a corner and surveyed the girl's carriage, her figure and the rhythm of her gait and discussed these points in a low voice, in the manner of horse-dealers looking over an animal that they intend to purchase. They told the girl to stop just where she was, to raise her hand, to move this way and that. From force of habit the girl complied.

"Well, what do you say, Mr. Director? Did I deceive

you?" asked Krumashatka in a whisper.

"She'll dance, all right. We'll see that she's taught well," replied the director in tones of satisfaction, and passed the cigarettes around a third time.

"Who brought her here?" asked the director in a

whisper, addressing Velfil.

"That fellow we were talking to downstairs. They call him Kanarik. He brought her here from the provinces. Says he picked her up in one of the circuses, and that he was beaten black and blue and stabbed more than once before they took him into their troupe. Then somebody wanted to take her away by force, but he wouldn't stand for it. He's a dangerous fellow, I tell you. He's ready to stab you on the instant, and our boys are afraid of him now. She's his woman and he is entitled to whatever money she brings. So you'll have to talk it over with him. It doesn't pay to get into trouble with him; he's a dangerous fellow."

"If that's the case, then let's go down and talk it over with him. There's no use consulting her about it," said

the director, and the men left the room.

CHAPTER III

"NOBODY MAKES AN EASY LIVING"

MOTTKE had remained behind in the café because his mind was greatly disturbed. The director's glances at Channele and his talk about her going around "idle" had disquieted him. Up to this time he had given Channele no special thought, although it was now a year and a half since he had come to Warsaw with Mari and given her into the resort above the Warsaw Café. Here he had become acquainted with Channele as the daughter of the café's proprietress, and waitress of the place.

He had at first been surprised to notice that people spoke and acted differently towards Channele than to the other girls, - that both the men who owned the street-girls and the guests that came to visit the women at night, were careful to make a distinction between her and the others. Nobody presumed to become familiar with her or to address other words to her than those required in ordering tea, coffee or cake, or paying one's bill. All this, despite the fact that Channele was busied about the café every night and saw the shameful doings of the women. Then he became accustomed to this distinction, as all the others had before, and learned that Channele was a respectable child and the others, prostitutes. And in common with the rest of the traffickers he commenced to feel that it was his duty to watch over her. Woe to the guest that should attempt to get familiar with her! And more: even the girls, who among themselves would use the coarsest of talk, were careful of their language when Channele was about. They vied with each other to win her friendship, and if she should spend a few more moments talking to one than with the other, they all envied the fortunate one.

Without being fully aware of it, the young men about the place always tried to appear at their best before Channele and to win her favor. Mottke did so, even as the others, unconsciously. He was enraged at the director's talk not only because that worthy had looked upon Channele as if she were a common woman of the streets, but because the man's words had set him to thinking about Channele in an altogether new light. His eyes had been opened to an important change in his own thoughts, and he wondered why he had not acted before now.

As he sat absorbed in these reflections he felt a slap on the shoulder from Red Velfil, who called him to the table, where the director and his tall, handsome young friend were already seated, waiting for him.

"Just listen to me, Kanarik, you can make a good little pile of money on this deal — more than you ever saw in your life. And if you'll be a wise fellow," continued Velfil, "you can make a bit of extra change, too."

"What am I supposed to do, and how much is there in it?" asked Mottke.

"The director wants to buy the Spanish girl from you,
— buy her out for good so that you give up all claim
to her," answered Krumashatka.

Mottke turned pale and made no reply. For a moment he was tempted to seize the director, the young man and Velfil, and knock the teeth and the eyes out of their heads. He had already doubled up his fists

when the director spoke. "I don't merely talk. I pay ready money. I'm not afraid that you'll steal it from me. I don't believe in hiding the gelt." And taking his large wallet from his inside pocket he slipped out a twenty-five rouble note and placed it on the table before Mottke. "Here's twenty-five roubles deposit, and if you bring her to the address that I'll give you, there's a hundred and fifty more for you where that came from."

When Mottke beheld the twenty-five rouble note the blood rushed to his face. A thought that was almost a hope glistened in his eyes, and the thought referred to Channele. Why, he did not know. His anger subsided. He let the money lie on the table, and in a quivering voice, said, "I'll think the matter over."

"What do you mean, think it over? Here, take the money," urged Velfil. "What? Haven't you enough girls as it is? And if you want to, can't you take Dobrish and Gnendel away from Shlayme Shlossenhacker? Are you afraid of him? How does he come to them, anyway? You've got as much right to them as he."

"I'm not afraid," replied Mottke, calmly, "only I want to think it over."

"All right," said the director. "Think it over, and meanwhile keep the money. I trust you with it. And if you decide to let me have her, Velfil will give you the address. And I won't haggle with you over the price, either. If you bring her, you'll get two hundred roubles, only remember that I must have her by four o'clock Sunday. After that I haven't any use for her. Come, Krumashatka, I've got to be going." The director arose, leaving the twenty-five rouble note on the table.

Mottke remained in his seat, and looked at the money.

He turned red, and felt half frightened, but he said not a word.

Before leaving, the director and his assistant stopped in the doorway for a few words with Velfil. Suddenly Velfil called into the kitchen. "Channele!"

At the sound of the name Mottke sprang to his feet, but the proprietress answered from within that Channele was not at home, and soon appeared herself upon the threshold. Hearing that the girl was not there, the director left the café together with Krumashatka.

Velfil came over to Mottke to discuss the matter with him.

On the same floor where Velfil kept his place there lived a Jewish cigarette-maker, a poor, thin fellow that had been blessed with many children. His wife regularly gave birth to nothing but twins, and because of her frequent child-bearing was a semi-invalid, usually confined to her bed. Her husband would run around all day long in the small hotels, selling his wares, while the mother, herself too sick to tend to her numerous progeny, abandoned them to God's own mercy. But the poor Jew's real livelihood came not from cigarettes but from his sick wife, who had once been a seamstress. To this very day she maintained a shop. — that is to say, a school for little girls, where they learned to sew and sat all day working upon children's clothes. The weak woman would cut out the dresses and the little girls would sew them. While the goods were waiting to be made into dresses they would be used as bed-spreads. as tablecloths, or to cover the children with at night. Often the girls of the resort on the same floor would come into the sick woman's place to spend the time chatting with her, especially during the day when there was nothing for them to do. One of the girls would help the invalid wash and comb the children: another would wash the dishes for her; a third would assist the little pupils with their sewing. For the inmates of Velfil's place were strongly attracted to their neighbors and sought to make friends of them: nor did the neighbors feel any special repugnance towards the girls or their profession. Every person must see how best to get along in life, and nobody makes an easy living. So that the neighbors pitied rather than scorned the girls, and often did not even pity them. They had become used to the girls and treated with them as equals with equals, often befriending them.

Mari, like the other girls, had made friends with the cigarette-maker's wife and often stepped into her place, helping the children with the household duties and chatting with the sick woman, who as often as possible sat by the window and tried to catch a breath of fresh air. The life in the den to which Mottke had brought her was not at all to her taste; not because of the indecency of the trade, but because it had all become so monotonous. At first, when they had just arrived in Warsaw, the city filled her with interest. Now she knew Warsaw a little better. She had promenaded through Marshalkovski Street, through the Saxon Gardens, had visited the Yiddish theatre — and longed for the wagonbooth in which she was wont to ride from one city to the other with the performers. She would long ago have run away from this place, had it not been that she feared Mottke, who had become not only her owner but her protector as well, and like all his other girls she felt for him a certain love mingled with submission. Mottke became for her, in this vast city, a veritable father or an elder brother, — the only relative she had. Everything he did was right, and she must obey him blindly in all things. Ever since the episode with Kanarik in the forest, Mottke had risen in her eyes to the proportions of a god, and her fear for him had turned into love. She could not imagine how she could get along a single day without him to rule over her. And when Mottke would come to her and scold her, taking away the tips she had received from guests and heaping a volley of curses upon her head, she felt that she belonged to him, that she had a home, — and a father.

Because of this the visit of the two men who had acted so strangely filled her with fear. She was not accustomed to obeying any other than Mottke. She was sorely perplexed, and, since when any of the girls had something upon their minds, they would go to the cigarette-maker's wife, sit down before her bed and pour out their hearts to her, Mari now did likewise.

"Oh, Leah, dear, such rich people were to see me today, and looked me over so strangely, and didn't ask anything of me at all, but just looked me over, as if they wanted to buy me. Oh, where is Kanarik? I'm so terribly afraid. Velfil brought them in," she related to the woman in the bed.

"Don't worry, you little goose. You may be sure Kanarik knows all about it. Velfil would never have dared to bring them to you without Kanarik's knowledge, and as long as you have Kanarik, you needn't be afraid of anybody."

"They're all afraid of Kanarik," replied Mari, proudly. "He's stronger than any of them."

"I should say so," came from the bed. "And as long as you have Kanarik, — you little goose — " Mari listened with pride and felt reassured.

The next moment Kanarik appeared on the threshold. "Nina!"

The girl jumped to her feet as if a thunderclap had boomed.

"I'm coming right away, Kanarik!" And she ran into the entry.

"Go dress yourself. I've got to go somewhere with you."

"Kanarik!"

"What are you standing there for? Make it quick. I haven't any time."

When they had reached her room Mari took Mottke by the hand. "Kanarik, where are you taking me?" she asked.

"You'll see for yourself."

She came closer to him and looked into his eyes with terror. "Who are those strange people?"

"What business is it of yours?"

She seized both his hands and pressed tightly to him, looking him straight in the eyes. "Mottke, what are you going to do with me?"

The man bit his lips and looked around quickly, afraid lest someone had heard his name. Then he doubled up his fists. "What did you do? Someone might have heard you. I'll knock your teeth out for you."

"Beat me, beat me as much as you please, do with me as you wish. Only don't give me into the hands of strangers. Don't sell me. Don't sell me. Mottke, my own dear Mottke!" The girl fell before his feet, embracing his knees and clinging to him passionately. She could speak no more, but looked at him with eyes that were filled with mute supplication, like those of a dog that begs its master not to drive it away. "Dress yourself. I want to bring you to a guest in a hotel," said Mottke, trying to reassure her with a lie.

"I'll be ready in a moment," she cried, springing to her feet. Casting a glance of infinite gratitude at Mottke she began to dress herself hurriedly.

CHAPTER IV

THROUGH THE MUGGY EVENINGS

THE old city had lighted its street-corner lamps; nightlife had begun. Soon from the shop-windows and the cheap moving-picture theatres came the dim yellow-grey light that shone upon the old walls and cast bluish shadows on the fronts of the nearby buildings. In the labyrinthine corridors there began to appear the girls clad in their seductive white batiste negligée with the red ribbons. Through the dimness sparkled their flashing eyes and wan, yet attractive faces, looking imploringly about, as if asking the onlooker to share the burden of the illness in which they languished. And the onlooker complied. . . .

Soon, too, there appeared outside the watchmen arm in arm with their sweethearts, playing harmonicas as they sat or walked about. Women with infants at their breast sat down in the dry gutters, breathed in the cool air, and opening the waists that covered their flaccid breasts proceeded to feed their offspring in public in the manner of all living creatures, without the slightest tinge of embarrassment. For it was a summer night, exceedingly humid, and the atmosphere of the close, narrow houses which have no yards, was stifling. The thirst for fresh air had brought to the street even the dwellers of the innermost apartments.

It was a Friday night, and the orthodox Jewish wives had prepared in advance all the meals for the Sabbath. The odor of the cooked fish and the pickled meats found

its way to the streets and its spiciness penetrated the nostrils of the passers-by and those who had come into the street for relief from the stuffiness indoors. . . .

Gradually the sidewalks began to assume a more lively aspect, and soon thronged with men who had come from other parts of the city to meet the girls. It was a motley throng, — young and old men, some in civilian dress and others in government uniforms, soldiers and officers, — all here as equals.

Mothers with infants at the breast, watchmen out promenading with their servant friends, and children of various ages, rubbed elbows with the visitors from the better sections of the city, and upon all shone the half-seductive, half-secret grey gas light that cast bluish shadows upon the gloomy walls.

The great intellectual city of Warsaw seemed in a trice to have been transformed into a revelry of primitive people in a primitive world where men and women were not ashamed to love one another openly. . . .

From time to time a guardian of law and order would pass and make sure that all was as it should be; but often his all-too-human instincts would get the better of his sense of duty, and the guardian of the law would disappear into the darkness of a labyrinthine corridor with a seductive form wrapped in a white tulle gown. . . .

The Warsaw Café was athrill with its usual nightly activity. Upon the counter were displayed the cookies, egg-cakes and other dainties that had during the day been hidden from the flies, and behind, the large samovar was boiling away merrily. The tables were well occupied and over the room, like a veiling cloud, rose thin curls of smoke from the cigarettes and cigars. The occupants were for the most part patrons of nearby resorts, but there was a goodly number of ordinary customers as

well, such as often came in for a glass of tea and a game of dominoes. One or two were plainly accidental visitors.

At the rear sat a few girls dressed in attractive colors, their wet hair combed into pompadours; from their corner came an odor of cheap powder and perfume. They had jumped in from the street to take a little rest, to have a chat with a patron or with an owner of one of the brothels.

But tonight Channele was not standing behind the counter. Neither was her mother. For it was Friday night, and the man of the house, who was away at business all the week, was now at home with his family in the kitchen eating the Sabbath eve meal.

From the kitchen came the odor of fish and the sound of a sleepy voice intoning the Sabbath songs. Behind the counter was a Gentile woman, the wife of the watchman, who regularly served from Friday to Saturday night. It was she who handled all money taken in during those twenty-four hours. Near her, watching, stood a young child, one of the household twins, whose duty it was to see that the Gentile woman took none of the small change for herself; moreover, she knew that he was there for just that purpose. So did the guests, who saw to it that every coin that she received for a glass of tea or some cakes was at once placed in the till. This she did.

At one of the tables sat Kanarik and his Spanish wire-walker. For Mari was not, like the other girls, a street-woman. Mottke would not permit her to descend to that level; he reserved her for the better class of patrons; brought her to certain hotels by appointment, or permitted her to go only to officers that had come for pleasure to the "Old City." She was, there-

fore, not dressed in the light, filmy clothes that the street-girls wore every evening, but in a fashion considered more respectable: a white silk waist, with low neck and short sleeves, and many Spanish combs in her hair.

In addition to her, Kanarik had other girls that worked for him, whom he had acquired mainly by force. But for the most part these girls were older than Mari and were considered cheap goods, who plied their trade upon the public thoroughfare and were beneath the honor of being seen on "workdays" out walking with their owner or seated at the same table with him. The whole café and all the neighborhood knew by this time of the proposition that had been offered to the Spanish girl, and that the director of "The Aquarium" had come to engage her for his café chantant. Thus at a bound the Spanish tight-rope walker leaped into fame in the underworld.

As soon as the news had spread the girls of the various brothels began to fawn upon Kanarik and his Nina. Especially did they envy the Spanish girl and desire to come under the ownership of Kanarik, for in the first place, Kanarik was a strapping young fellow who inspired the cadets and thugs of the neighborhood with fear, so that to be one of his women was in itself a guarantee of security. Secondly, Kanarik was well-known for the generous way in which he treated his girls. He would often take them out walking on Saturday afternoons, or to the Yiddish theatre, or through the Saxon Gardens, and would buy them pretty things to wear.

For this reason he was sure to be surrounded by girls the moment he sat down at a table. On this particular night, Dobrish and the "Gasteninerin," Sarah, coming into the café for a little rest, and seeing Kanarik seated with the Spanish girl, hurried over to their table and made merry with them.

Dobrish and the "Gasteninerin," however, belonged to Shlavme Shlossenhacker, who in his palmy days had filled the whole vicinity with terror at his mere approach. All kinds of miracles were related of him: that he had fought ten policemen at a time and emerged victorious, and that he could break through locks as if by magic; hence his last name. But that was all long ago: today Shlayme Shlossenhacker lived on the laurels of his glorious past rather than on the present. He drank too much beer and had as a result acquired a formidable abdomen and had begun to age. And since the "new guy" had come around and had given him a merciless drubbing at the time Shlayme had tried to take the Spanish girl away from Mottke, as a result of which the poor fellow had to remain abed for a couple of weeks. — Shlavme's prestige had fallen considerably and Kanarik-Mottke's star was in the ascendant. Yet Shlavme, even yet, often inspired awe by the remembrance of his past, and very few cared to begin anything with him.

Just as all the large planets are surrounded by satellites, even as a king by his ministers, so the brothel owners each had his group of strong-arm men that acted as watchers and overseers. Kanarik was as yet too young and inexperienced in the business to understand the value of such adjutants. But Shlayme Shlossenhacker was well supplied for these purposes in the person of Yaysef the Monkey, a thin chap with a long, crooked nose, who served his master with cringing faithfulness and seemed to be devoted entirely to his praises. At night Yaysef haunted the sidewalks of

the slums, spying upon Shlayme's girls and seeing to it that they did their best to attract custom and that they kept on the streets rather than stop for a rest. One sight of Yaysef the spy was enough to frighten the girls into renewed activity, and they would become more brazen than ever in accosting passers-by, anxious to show that they were earnestly at work.

And now, when Dobrish and the "Gasteninerin" were seated at the same table with Kanarik and the Spanish girl, who should enter but Yavsef the Monkey. With his cunning eves he surveyed the café, and suddenly noticing that Kanarik was seated with two of Shlayme Shlossenhacker's women he disappeared at once. It was against the accepted law of the underworld for a fellow cadet to sit with the women of another; this was interpreted as a virtual challenge of ownership. a token that he with whom the other's women sat intended to establish a claim to the women and defend that claim with fists. Shlayme's two women, however, had not noticed that Yaysef had been in the café and they continued to sit at Kanarik's table. Soon, however, several other girls ran over to them and warned them. for the street-women looked out for one another.

"Sarah dear, for the love of God, Yaysef was here and saw you girls sitting with Kanarik!"

"Woe is me!" cried the two girls, terrified, throwing their shawls over their shoulders and preparing to run out.

A sudden impulse seized Mottke,—a will to rule, to show that he was stronger than Shlayme. Whereupon he cried out, "Sit down! I command you girls to remain seated!"

The girls turned pale and did not know what to do. They really desired to remain, and in their hearts they rejoiced that Mottke was to take them under his owner-ship, — that they would henceforth belong to him. But they feared Shlayme Shlossenhacker and the scene that they now felt was inevitable. Kanarik, however, commanded them in such a determined voice that they remained seated, their features contracted and pale with terror.

"Some tea and cheese-cakes!" ordered Kanarik.

The occupants of the café began to prepare for the scandalous scene that was soon to be enacted. They sat in their places, and from the street came others, attracted by the noise and curious to see what the outcome would be.

"Eat and drink!" commanded Kanarik, addressing Shlayme's girls, who sat with palpitating hearts, motionless. They began to implore him. "Kanarik dear, what are you doing? Let us be off. Shlayme will murder us."

"Don't be afraid. I'm here. Just let him dare to touch you! I'll break his head for him!"

And in their hearts the girls rejoiced at Kanarik's stand.

"Eat and drink, I say," ordered Kanarik.

The girls, with trembling hearts and deep anxiety, obeyed, tense with anticipation. It was not long before the redoubtable Shlayme entered. He was already elderly in appearance, with the build of a Jew of forty, big-boned, corpulent, with a red neck. His gold watch-chain jumped up and down across his paunch from the force of his heavy steps. His face, although it was beginning to show the lines of age, and looked tired and wan, still retained traces of youth, — short moustache, thick eyebrows and a pair of large, projecting ears. He seemed to walk in an aura of frightfulness. As he entered, a sudden hush fell upon the café, — the

calm before the storm. Dobrish and Sarah cringed and hid their faces in their tea-glasses, so as not to see him. Shlayme, one hand in his trousers pocket, the other behind his back, strode over to Kanarik's table, looked around at first without saying a word, as if seeking something, and then, seeing his two women, spoke in a voice of surprise.

"What are you two doing here? Why aren't you

out on the street?"

"Just a second. We simply wanted to have a glass of tea." replied Sarah, arising.

"Keep your seat!" thundered Kanarik, banging his fist upon the table, so that the girl and even Shlayme himself turned ashen white and stepped back. The girl sat down.

"What do you call this, you —?" cried Shlayme, advancing, and looking Kanarik square in the eyes.

Kanarik, however, affected not to notice him, and turned to the girls. "I'll break your heads for you," he threatened, "if either of you attempts to leave this place. You sit right here at my table! And let's see who'll dare to chase you away!"

"Is that so?" shouted Shlayme, his eyes lighting up with anger and fear. "I tell you to go out to the street thisminute! This minute, I say, or I'll crack your skulls!"

The girls looked around in terror, at a loss as to whom they should obey; they had already stood up, but one glance from Kanarik had made them drop back into their chairs.

For a moment an intense silence filled the café. Shlayme had again turned pale; his nostrils distended with anger; his lips had parted, revealing his teeth, and his eyes burned with a flame of fury as he tried to catch Kanarik's glance.

But Kanarik did not look at him; it was as if Shlayme were not even present.

"Why aren't you drinking?" he asked one of the girls, shoving the glass nearer to her.

"You dirty mahmzer," cried Shlayme, again advaning towards Kanarik.

At the sound of the word Kanarik jumped to his feet and looked deep into Shlayme's eyes. For several moments they stood thus, looking daggers, like two tigers ready to pounce upon each other.

The silence in the café was so intense that the buzzing of the flies about the cheese-cakes was distinctly audible. The various satellites seated about remained rooted to their chairs, afraid to interfere. Suddenly Dobrish jumped to her feet. "Come here, come here!" she shouted to the proprietress, "See what's going on!"

Dobrish's cries brought the family at once to the threshold of the ante-room. The husband, a lanky Jew who carried on some illegal business during the week, the stout proprietress and Channele gazed in astonishment upon the sight of the two men eyeing each other fiercely. None dared approach them: everybody instinctively recoiled, waiting for the storm to break out in all its fury. Of a sudden Channele, her hair smooth and shining from its Sabbath washing, jumped in between the two men, and turned to Mottke, her hands and her eyes raised in entreaty. "What are you doing, Kanarik?" she asked. "They'll close up our business. The policeman is outside. I beg you. Kanarik!"

The beating of her heart could be heard in her voice. The crowd gaped in horror, afraid that she would be struck by Kanarik. "Channele, Channele!" shrieked her mother, "for God's sake get out of the way!" But

Channele stood her ground, and continued to plead. "Kanarik, please don't start anything!"

Kanarik's gaze dropped from Shlayme's eyes and turned to Channele's shining hair. He looked at the two black braids that fell over her back and the purity that shone in her eyes. But he could not look at her for long, and his glance fell to the earth; a good-natured smile curled through his lips and around his moustache, he scratched himself behind the ear and then called to the Spanish girl. "Come, Nina."

He took the wire-walker by the arm and cast a look of scorn in Shlayme's direction. "A black year take him," he muttered under his nose, and left the restaurant.

The crowd wondered at Kanarik's action.

CHAPTER V

ONE OF MOTTKE'S SATURDAYS

It was one of Mottke's customs to go out walking with his women every Saturday. He would take tham about the city, through the Saxon Gardens, for instance, or, as we have seen, to the Yiddish theatre, especially if the offering was one of those excellent pieces where children sang many songs and where there was a good deal of praying for the dead. And this Saturday, as usual, his women were busy dressing themselves for their weekly outing; Saturday, indeed, was the happiest and the freest day of their existence, — the day when they might go out into the world not to earn money but to seek pleasure, — when they dressed not for business but for themselves and their friends.

So every Saturday morning in Red Velfil's brothel was a time of bustle and happy preparations. The girls would iron their waists and pick out their best clothes, seeking each other's advice in the matter. Most of their preparations, however, were not for themselves, but for Mottke. One would launder a shirt for him, another would press his trousers, a third would brush his velvet vest, while a fourth would polish his shoes; for, the more elegantly Mottke was dressed while out walking with them, the better it looked for them and the prouder they felt in his company.

When the girls would be dressed they would step into the cigarette-maker's wife to hear her judgment upon their clothes. The sick woman would as usual be sitting by the window refreshing herself. Today the children, their faces and noses bearing evidences of their Sabbath dinner, their holiday hats upon their heads, were squatted on the floor playing jacks. Melech the cigarette-maker, who had himself once been a very orthodox Jew, but was now too much occupied in scraping together a living, was, as usual on every Sabbath at home, reciting aloud selections from the sayings of the wise men.

The girls entered, dressed in their gingham dresses with alpaca folds, and displayed for the invalid's approval their latest hats, adorned with plumes and flowers. their new shoes and other recent acquisitions. This was a source of great pleasure to the sick woman, who herself not having anything to wear, and having been confined to the house for years, revelled in this vicarious adornment and the opportunity to talk styles, to which she had, as a girl, devoted more time than to anything else. So she would sit, delivering judgments: that this garment wasn't at all becoming, and that that color didn't match so and so's complexion. Nor did she hesitate to put the hats on her Sabbath wig and over her sallow face, enviously thinking to herself, as she did so, "If I only had such things as this to wear I'd be a good-looking woman even today, and I'd go out promenading despite my illness."

"You'd better take in these folds, Rosie," she said to one of the girl, determined to have her understand that she was a skinny thing, after all.

"Ah, well. They're wearing them that way these days. That's all you see the women wearing on Marshal-kovski Street."

Melech the cigarette-maker had not at first been at all pleased to have these women as steady visitors to his

home and constant companions of his wife. But he simply could not help himself. They were neighbors of his, and the girls were naturally attracted to his house by the desire for neighborly friendship; there was no closing the door against them. Often, too, they would do him a favor. Besides giving his children two-kopeck pieces, bringing them cakes, and frequently helping his invalid wife with the household duties, they largely supported his secret trade in cigarettes, selling his wares to the guests that came to them. Such favors led to a certain friendship between the man and the girls, despite the character of their profession. Indeed, in Melech's household it had almost been forgotten that they were street-walkers. They acted like good neighbors and like any other human beings. and in time the cigarette-maker became so accustomed to them that he even forgot what they were. To be sure, he had often thought of moving, so as to be rid of the girls' company, but then, there was no money that could be spared for that purpose. And then again, the family had become accustomed to the various favors the girls were always doing. . . .

On the Sabbath day, more than at any other time, the visits of the lewd women vexed the cigarette-maker. It seemed that they desecrated the atmosphere of the holy day, especially while he recited the Sabbath sayings. So today, as usual, he turned away, became absorbed in his book, and read aloud in sing-song fashion.

"The world rests upon three things. . . ."

And the girls listened to the familiar sing-song, which recalled the chanting of their own fathers, and they felt as if at home once again.

The "Lovitcherin," Dobrish, liked more than any

of the other girls to come to the cigarette-maker's home on a Saturday afternoon, for she had been brought up in a pious household. To this very day, indeed, her father is a Rabbi in Lovitch. She had fallen in love with a barber, while her father insisted that she marry a certain dried-up theological student. She used to earn her own living as a stockingmaker. The barber persuaded her to elope with him, and they ran off to Lodz. Arrived there, he gave her into a certain place from which she had come to Velfil's. Now, however, she no longer felt any particular sadness or joy. To each person falls some misfortune or other. and besides, nobody makes an easy living. Yet she hoped sooner or later to emerge from her present life and marry some worthy chap, wherefore she continued to collect her linens as part of her dowry. She cherished a particular affection for the cigarette-maker and his family; on Saturdays she loved to hear him read from the savings. It reminded her of her own father, and perhaps, too, of her own youth, that at times arose before her eyes as if in a dream. . . .

And now Mottke's various women had gathered in the Spanish girl's room, dressed up ready for their weekly walk, waiting for Mottke.

There were four girls: Mari and three others whom Mottke had taken to himself by right of might and placed in various brothels of the district. They usually assembled in Mari's room because they knew that she occupied a station far above their own, since she did not parade the streets. Besides, Mottke bought her more costly clothes than he did the others.

It was quite late and Mottke had not yet appeared. Shlayme Shlossenhacker had already shown up and taken out his girls: Sarah, the "Yatele" and "Blonde Rosie." Dobrish had not cared to go out, as she preferred to visit the cigarette-maker's and listen to him recite the sayings of the sages. Mottke's women paced nervously up and down the room, looked through the window, watched the stairs, prepared his shirt, his suit, his shoes and his ties, but still no Mottke appeared. Mari took off her hat with the red roses and swore that even if Mottke burst with anger she would not go out walking with him that day.

"You'll change your mind. If he asks you, you'll go, all right," said the other girls, not without a tinge of envy for the favorite.

While his women thus waited for him to appear Mottke had entered the café. It was deserted, and for once in the whole week the samovar was silent. Mottke peeped into the dark, and saw Channele at the window, reading a book. Seeing him, she was surprised, and wondered what he could be doing in the tea-house at such an hour, when not a soul was in the place. But she made believe not having noticed him, and continued to be absorbed in her book.

Mottke turned from one corner of the place to the other, as if in search of somebody. The girl, however, did not ask what or whom he wished, for he was at home in the café and might enter at will.

Mottke noticed that the proprietress was not about; she and her husband were asleep in the rear-room. Neither were Channele's little brothers in the house.

He took courage, coughed, and made a step towards the girl; standing at some distance from her, and with a look of embarrassment upon his face, he asked, "What are you reading, Channele? A book?"

The young girl was unaccustomed to being addressed by any of the cadets except when they ordered tea or paid their bills. As we have seen, she inspired respect even among the fallen women, who, at her approach would suddenly cease their lewd talk and pass the warning along: "Hush! A girl's here!" She knew, of course, the trade in which the women were engaged, but she, like the cigarette-maker's family, had become used to this. It did not inflame her imagination or lead her to troublesome thoughts. She looked upon the women of the brothels as she looked upon all her other neighbors: they were unfortunates. But what could be done? Nobody makes an easy living. So she treated with them as she did with any other human beings. She was thus all the more surprised when Mottke suddenly accosted her and looked into her book, — something he had never done before.

She looked up at him. "I'm reading a book," she replied. And she went back to her reading.

For a moment Mottke was silent, then managed to ask again, "What kind of book? A story?"

"Yes, a story. Here, see for yourself." And the girl placed the book in his hand.

Mottke took it, held it upside down and turned as red as a bashful boy. "I can't read," he confessed, in a voice that betrayed shame. "Is it a pretty story?"

"Yes, very. It's called 'Yossele'."

"And what's it about?"

"It's the story of a poor little orphan boy, who had no father or mother, and wandered about amidst strangers and was beaten by everybody," replied the girl, and a tear glistened in her eye as she recounted the pitiful tale.

Mottke was lost in thought for a while. His face suddenly acquired a look of childish innocence and his eye shone with the light of purity. "Oh, what a pretty story that is," he replied, with a bashful smile. "I'd like to hear all of it."

"I'll tell it to you sometime."

"You'll tell it to me?"

"Yes," nodded the girl.

"That's fine!"

"Channele, Channele! Come right in here!" came the voice of her mother from the rear-room. The proprietress feared Mottke.

Mottke left for his women. This Saturday he was not at all good to them. He found fault with the shirt that they had laundered for him, and moreover, refused to go out with all the girls. It didn't look at all well. he averred, for him to go out with a group of four. They would have to walk two by two. When at last he was dressed for the walk he surveyed the girls and for the first time it seemed to him that somehow or other they weren't properly clad. He ordered them to tear off the plumes from their hats; the girls looked at him as if he had gone mad, but they obeyed. His word was command. When they went walking that day, it was not in a single group, as heretofore, but two by two. like geese: and in that manner they strolled through the Saxon Gardens. Their favorite walk was thronged with promenaders; everywhere, on the benches, among the trees and on the paths, young men and women were to be seen, and as Mottke passed by with his women, the latter felt proud to be seen being led by him.

He strode along with his hands in his pockets, his hat on one side and his eyes on the ground. Through his open vest was visible his white shirt, which the girls had ironed as stiff as a board. He wore no collar, but instead a narrow, long tie which one of his women

had sewed for him out of a red ribbon; the polished legs of his boots shone from afar.

The crowd knew him, and one young man would nudge the other and say, "Look, — here comes Kanarik with his women!"

The girls knew that all eyes were turned upon them, and felt prouder than ever.

During the walk Mottke met Shlayme Shlossenhacker, who was also out promenading with his sweethearts. But Kanarik's women were far better dressed than Shlayme's and hence held their noses high in the air, while the other girls envied them. For they knew that Kanarik took his women to theaters; on the contrary Shlayme was notorious for his stinginess; he was saving up a fortune, it was rumored, for the time he would marry.

The eyes of the two men met. Mottke's gaze shone with a smile of scorn and Shlayme avoided his look.

But Mottke did not remain long in the Gardens. He took his women to the Yiddish theatre where he was exceedingly well-known at the box-office. And most welcome, too, for he paid his way and that of his women with rouble notes, - something to which the Yiddish theatre was not at all accustomed. The assistant director, a stout personage with a pair of ugly black front teeth and a gold harp stuck in his lapel ran to greet him, while all the ushers rushed up the aisle and vied with each other to show him to his seat, addressing him all the while in Polish. The piece they were then playing contained many songs, and plenty of mourning for dead parents by young children. Mottke's women wept profusely, and with their silk handkerchiefs wiped the tears from their powdered cheeks. Between the acts Mottke went out to the refreshment counter and bought his companions chocolate, and treated an usher, an actor or one of the directors to a glass of brandy. Then he returned to his seat and listened with a grave countenance to the songs, which pleased him greatly.

But most of all he liked the low comedian and the youngsters who mourned their parents. He had chocolate sent to them behind the scenes.

And the girls were happy. They liked everything in the show, and fell in love with every actor. For a whole week they sang the songs that they had heard at the theatre, and told the other girls and the invalid wife of the cigarette-maker, and Channele, how the youngsters prayed for their dead mother, and how the baby stretched out its little hands. And with almost unbearable impatience they waited for the following Saturday, when Mottke would take them to the theatre again.

But Mottke felt a certain dissatisfaction with himself since his meeting with Channele that Saturday.

CHAPTER VI

A CHANGE OF HEART.

TOTTKE had become intensely restless. With each succeeding day Channele became more dear to him; he had fallen in love with her and did not know how to broach the subject. The man who ruled over four lives in Warsaw, who was accustomed to delivering commands and being obeyed upon the instant, who allowed neither conscience nor law to stand between him and his will, became as helpless as a child before the slender, winsome girl with the two long, black braids, the two eves that looked fearlessly into those of all she met, and who held aloof from the patrons of the café, doing her work as a duty and going her own way. Moreover, Mottke felt ill at ease in her presence. Since he had spoken to her that Saturday when he had found her reading, he was unable to look her straight in the face without a feeling of embarrassment. . . . More than once he had tried to convince himself that he was a free lance who was allowing himself to be caught by a mere slip of a girl, — that it did not become a cadet like him to let himself be led by the nose by a café girl, a little simpleton. Once and for all he would show who Mottke was, and that nobody could play with Mottke. He would steal into her room at night and "finish" her. . . . For no special reason at all, but simply because he so desired it. And let anybody try to punish him for it, if they dared.

He had already discovered where her room was. Just behind the alcove were two dark rooms, one with no window. He knew that it was here that Channele slept, and that he must steal in to her through the adjoining room with the windows, which was occupied by her parents. But this did not frighten him. He relied upon his skill and his long practise.

For the whole day and night before the time he had chosen he avoided a meeting with Channele and the sight of her eves. Late that night, when the girls had already disappeared from the street and only a few late visitors were left in the café, he showed himself. The Warsaw Café was only dimly lighted because the proprietress was loth to put twenty kopecks into the automatic gas-meter, and the lamps burned as if the ends of the wicks had been reached. In a corner sat a couple of dejected girls who had not succeeded in attracting any wayfarers, and they poured out their hearts to one another. In the house itself all were asleep. Mottke went into the kitchen, which was barred with a board. Deftly he raised the board without the slightest noise. On all fours, making his way by the light of the dim lamp that burned in Channele's room, he crawled through the room in which the husband and wife were sleeping. Through the darkness came a loud snoring from several corners, and behind Mottke glided his shadow, into Channele's room with him. His first problem was how to discover in which of the beds she lay; the second, how to extinguish the lamp, make his way to her bed, clap his hand over her mouth and lie down at her side. As he crawled into the room he felt a damp warmth strike his face: it came from the breathing of the sleepers. 266

which was distinctly audible. His heart began to beat violently, and by the light of the lamp he tried to make out where Channele lay. She was on a sleeping bench, -a chest that served as bench by day and as bed by night. The bench was covered with pillows, all filled with feathers that were to form part of the girl's future dowry; on them lay Channele, and at her side her fivevear old brother, who had nestled up close to her. The picture made by the sister and brother charmed Mottke. He did not extinguish the lamp; he knelt at the bedside and looked into Channele's sleeping face. He could hear her breath come through her thin nostrils and open mouth, and could feel the warmth that radiated from her over-heated body. Her black tresses, now loose and covered here and there with feathers, lay across her face and her naked arms, and rose and fell with the heaving of her breasts. Her arms were around the neck of her little brother. Her eyes were shut, but under her tightly closed lashes could be discerned the curve of her eyes; the straight black hairs of her lashes locked together like the winglets of a little bird; on her lips played that same winsome smile that inspired respect in Mottke and that had rendered him as helpless as a child every time he had plucked up the courage to approach her and speak a word. There was Mottke, kneeling before her bed, deeply engrossed in thought as she lay in sleep before him, listening to her rhythmic breathing and feeling the warmth from her body, and he imagined that he was her husband. He had just come home, late at night, from a fair, chilled to the marrow by the damp, cold night and the long journey. and was about to crawl into bed by her side, to be warmed by her young body, amidst the pillows and the feathers. A smile of happiness came to his lips. It was so good to imagine such scenes! And he forgot altogether the purpose which had brought him to Channele's room. He had lost all desire to carry out his original plan. It was so good to be here looking at her, to watch her heaving bosom, to feel the warmth of her breath and to picture her as his wife, as his true and only wife.

With more caution than he exercised in coming, he crawled out of her room. He wished to wake neither her nor her father, lest he cause them needless fright. That night Mottke did not sleep so soundly as usually,—not during that night nor more than one that followed. He thought only of how he could make his picture come true, how Channele could be won for his wife, his very own. Not to become one of those girls of his whom he could no longer endure, but his true wife into whose arms he could creep and warm himself after the cold, damp journey through the night.

CHAPTER VII

MOTTKE GOES A-COURTING.

To the astonishment of all his friends Mottke began to show evidences of a marked change. He began to treat his women with all the harshness that Shlayme Shlossenhacker displayed; to look upon them as so much merchandise, and he put an abrupt end to all familiarity with them. No longer did he sit at the same table with them in the Warsaw Café; his walks with them on Saturday afternoons took place but rarely. He began to save his money, and with a niggard-liness that he had never before displayed he haggled over the allowance for clothes, hats and shoes that his women asked. Like Shlayme Shlossenhacker he often reminded them that their business was to make money.

"Just listen to her, will you? Every Monday and Thursday she wants a new hat! You can wear the one you have on."

Nobody knew what had come over Mottke. He would sit all night long in the café, or else walk about the street watching his women, and searched their clothing for concealed money. . . . He became a bitter soul. When his fellow cadets began to notice how greedy he had become, and that he was saving up money, no longer throwing rouble notes into the box-office window, they laughed behind his back. Cheimel Mahmzer even dared to poke fun at him before his very

face. "What's up, Kanarik? Are you saving up for the wedding, that you've got so stingy these days?"

"Don't worry your head on my account. Just keep scratching away at it and don't mix into other people's affairs," was Mottke's rejoinder.

And really, Mottke's actions were beyond all understanding. He ordered a dignified suit, and on Saturdays he dressed like any other respectable Jew, and would walk up and down before the Warsaw Café. While everybody wondered what had come over him, he himself was wondering how he could get to Channele, and just what he should say to her.

He was accustomed to the immediate execution of everything he undertook. He had no time to wait, and expected that Channele would be affianced to him in very short order. It never occured to him that he could be refused. Why, indeed, should he be? "Am I not as good looking as any other?" he asked himself. "And can't I always make a living?" But how could he get to her?

. He had already bought for her a watch and a gold ring with a diamond; it had come to forty roubles in all. He kept these next his heart, tied in a piece of cloth. But how could he give these to her in such a way that it would appear respectable, that she should know he was in earnest?

In his mind he already pictured Channele as his bride and could see her as his wife coming with him to his mother on a visit for the holidays. Suddenly he reminded himself of his mother and desired to please her in some novel manner. Not his father: only his mother. He would buy her a beautiful present. He would buy her a new wig, a costly cloak and a shawl, and he and his bride would come home for the holidays.

Mottke would go out walking with Channele through the streets of the village; there would be a rush to the windows; women would whisper into each other's ears and ask, "Who is that man?"

"Why! Don't you recognize him? That's Mottke, Red Zlattke's son, who's come on a visit to his mother with his bride."

"What? Is that the little scamp Mottke who used to steal the rolls and the doughnuts out of the children's hands?"

"The very same. The rascal on account of whom nobody dared to let a child out of doors. Yes, that's Red Zlattke's son. Just see what a handsome chap he's grown to be! Heavens, what a large city can do for a person!"

"Isn't it splendid of a son to remember his mother, and bring her such lovely presents!"

"Yes, indeed. Let the poor woman have pleasure from her child, too. Poor soul, she's certainly earned it. How much trouble a woman has to go through before she raises such a splendid fellow!"

Such would be the remarks that would come to his ears from the women of his native town on a Saturday night when he'd go out walking with Channele. And he would act as if he were altogether unaware of the commotion he was causing. He would simply open his coat and show the golden chain that dangled from his vest, and Channele would wear a hat in the latest Warsaw fashion. Yes, he would pay fifteen roubles for that hat, too! There wasn't a girl in the whole town one half so pretty as Channele, nor one half so well-dressed; and she was his own bride, and let them all burst with envy!

Mottke grew radiantly happy in the contemplation

of the joyous prospects be pictured for himself and Channele. But how was he to get to her?

Should he go bravely before her and tell her that he wanted her to be his wife? He feared that she would be frightened and run away. He must broach the matter to her respectfully, ever so respectfully, so that she should know that he was in earnest, that in very truth he wished to be her husband.

There was nobody, not a friend, to whom he could come in his perplexity, so Mottke had to go to himself for counsel. Whereupon he finally evolved the plan of putting the whole affair into the hands of a shadchan, — a marriage broker, who would interview Channele's father, Reb Melech Lichtenstein, in his behalf. And of a sudden the very sound of Reb Melech's name became pleasant to Mottke's ears, and he remembered how he had heard it called out by the beadle, who had come to collect the fee which Reb Melech owed for the privilege of having read from the Holy Scroll. Yes, he would send a shadchan to see Reb Melech and propose the match.

In that very neighborhood lived an old Jew who kept a leather store. But Mottke knew that leather was not the real business of this Jew, for he was the cantor of a little synagogue nearby, also a mohel, and when the Feast of the Tabernacles came around, all the leather in the place would disappear, making way for john-apples and palm-branches. He was a Jew of impressive appearance, with a patriarchal beard, and none ever passed his store without wishing him a good morning. It was this man whom Mottke chose as his shadchan, for he knew him to be a person highly esteemed by all pious Jews, and for a holy purpose like marriage a Jew of high repute was necessary. It had come to

Mottke's ears that this particular Jew made matches for the very best families, and he was determined to send to Channele the best shadchan procurable, regardless of the size of the fee. He wished to impress her with the marriage-broker.

When Mottke appeared in the old Jew's store the place was thrown into such excitement that one would have thought the whole neighborhood was threatened by fire. The owner himself grew pale at the sight of his strange visitor, while his wife and children rushed to the threshold of the store, and stood there, rooted to the spot, expecting to see the head of the house murdered at any moment. . . . Mottke, at a loss to understand why his appearance should cause such terror. looked about in confusion, finally announcing that he desired to speak to Reb Brachyeh in private. (This Jew, like most honorable exemplars of piety, was named Reb Brachyeh.) Upon hearing that Mottke desired to be alone with the store-owner the wife and children grew more terrified than ever. "I don't care if it costs me my life!" shrieked Reb Brachyeh's spouse, "I'll stay right here!" But Mottke soon reassured the hysterical woman. He looked about and then, very simply, explained his purpose. "I should like, Reb Brachyeh, to have you go over to Reb Melech's café and propose a match between me and his daughter Channele."

When the old Jew heard what had brought the aweinspiring customer to him, he was ready to burst into loud laughter, but he did not dare even to smile, for he knew that it was as much as his life was worth to do so. He sank into deep thought and for a while was silent.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Mottke. "Don't let the money part of it trouble you. I won't

stint. I'll pay you just as well as the rich folk that patronize you." And his hand went to his pocket.

"You see," replied the shadchan, "this is a matter of . . . I mean . . . it's rather sudden to go and . . . er, have you spoken to the girl yet?" He had at last hit upon an idea to side-track Mottke for a while, and rid himself of the whole embarrassing business.

"No, not yet, but I think she'll be willing. Besides, it's not her affair. You talk to Reb Melech, and tell him that I sent you."

"I'll tell you," began the old man. "When it comes to a fellow of the modern, enterprising type, — for you are surely a young man of the world, I'd advise a personal interview with the young lady herself. Send the shadchan afterwards. You see the point, don't you?"

Mottke thought he saw the point. And besides, he was well pleased, — as the Jew had meant him to be, — by the compliment expressed in "a fellow of the modern, enterprising type." So he allowed himself to be convinced and decided that he must first talk things over with Channele.

"If the girl is willing, that's another matter altogether. In that case we can easily win over her father and her mother."

Mottke was more than ever convinced that the old man was right, and he departed with the determination to see Channele.

His interview with the girl he postponed until Saturday. On Saturday afternoon, he knew, her father and mother would be asleep, and Channele would be sitting at the window reading her story book. This would be a good opportunity to approach her. With palpitating heart he waited for the Sabbath day. He took extra care with his shaving, put on a collar and tie and his

best holiday suit, which had cost him twenty roubles, and wore his new, highly polished boots. Thus decked out he paraded up and down before the door of the Warsaw Café. In vain did his women wait for him; he had for some time given up his Saturday afternoon walks with them; he had even ceased showing special favors to Mari, who had descended to the level of the other women. The women themselves were aware of the change that had come over their master, and on Saturdays looked through their little windows like prisoners gazing out of their cells, or sat with the cigarette-maker's wife.

Mottke watched for a moment when nobody would be looking his way, and glided into the café, coming upon Channele in the alcove. She was sitting near the warm stove, reading her book by the light that penetrated through the frozen windows of the café. Mottke coughed, smiled, and turned aimlessly upon his heel. Channele, however, did not remove her eyes from the page. She had seen Mottke, but had continued reading nevertheless.

"How do you like my new suit, Channele?" asked Mottke, smiling, and showing his coat.

She raised her eyes from the book, cast a glance at him, looked for a moment at his suit and with a smile replied, "Fine." And she continued to read.

Her smile gave Mottke courage. "What are you reading?" he asked. "The story of the orphan again?"

"No. A different one."

"A pretty story, too?"

"Yes. Very pretty."

"You said you'd tell me the story of the orphan. Will you keep your promise?"

"Really, now. How could you care for such tales?"

To her lips came that same smile that Mottke had beheld as she lay sleeping, and again her eve-lashes closed as she lowered her glance to the book. To Mottke her smile, her eyes, her lashes seemed all as familiar as if they were already his. He fumbled about nervously for something that was wrapped in a piece of paper, crumpling it in his large, powerful hand. and began to stammer, growing pale, "Channele, I have something to say to you."

The girl grew frightened at the earnestness of his voice and the pallor of his face. For the first time she beheld him like this: Mottke stammering, Mottke turning pale! She rose, agitated, from her place,

"I wanted to say it for a long time, but I was unable.

Now I'll say it."

Channele's eves sought for a door. She did not know what to do. She blushed from fright.

From the piece of paper Mottke unwrapped the ladies' gold watch that he had been holding in a wallet next his heart. "I want to marry you," he said, in a half-stifled voice.

Almost in the same moment Channele turned pale and red. She opened her mouth to cry "Mamma!" but her fright had robbed her of speech. Her eves filled with entreaty, she looked at Mottke, to whom it seemed that he was choking a young dove, so great was the effect of her glance. He wanted to say something, but did not himself know just what, and finally managed to blurt, "Channele, I don't mean anything out of the way. . . . I mean I want to marry you, to be your real husband and have you for my wife."

Channele came to herself. The last word had brought a smile to her lips; this was not noticed by Mottke.

"Why should you want me? You have so many wives already."

And she ran into the next room.

Mottke was left standing with the gold watch in his hand, wondering what to do.

CHAPTER VIII

MOTTKE WRITES A LETTER TO HIS MOTHER

IT was not long before the whole vicinity — Red Velfil, the habitués of the Warsaw Café and the denizens of the underworld — knew that Mottke was suing for the hand of Channele. Wherever he went Mottke could hear derisive laughter behind him. "Here comes the suitor," people would say, and he felt sure that they stuck their tongues out after him, and he could see the smiles upon every face. He could not understand why he should have become the butt of laughter: it rendered him exceedingly irritable, and already he had paid his compliments to more than one chap, in the shape of a well pummeled face. "Cholera seize you!" he would cry. "What do you think? You fellows can marry and I can't?" He inspired such terror that people began to avoid him altogether; he became the talk of the district, and many was the laugh that his former companions had at his expense.

As for Channele, she had disappeared. Her mother feared to let her remain in the café, where Mottke could see her, so she had sent her for a few, weeks to an aunt in Pavia Street. This action vexed Mottke more than anything else, for in it he could discern the scorn and mistrust which people felt for him. They had hidden her from him, lest he do her harm! At first he thought that she had been hidden because her parents did not believe that he was in earnest, fearing that he wished to

deceive her and make of her just such a woman as those he owned. He thought over all sorts of plans for increasing her parents' confidence in him. His attitude towards his women had changed; he looked upon them now as so much merchandise, as if he were a total stranger to them; he began to deal with them more harshly than ever, just as Shlayme Shlossenhacker did with his women, and showed the proprietress of the café that he no longer was intimate with them. They simply represented his business. None of his women dared to appear while the proprietress was in the café. He would begin to scold them. "What are you doing here? Why aren't you on the street?"

But all Mottke's eagerness to conciliate the woman was of no avail. She avoided him, and everybody in her family trembled at sight of him.

Mottke, meanwhile, missed Channele sorely. He went about lost in vearning; he sought the consolation of talking with her little brothers, for whom he conceived a sudden affection. When they came home from school Mottke would play with them, give them money and take them to the candy store. When he was with the children he felt, somehow, as if she too were near. The face of the little fellow who slept with Channele recalled the scene of that night, and through the child he felt himself close to her. But Channele's mother feared his malign influence upon the children as well, and the moment Mottke would appear in the café she would summon the twins into the kitchen as if he were some evil spirit. "Mayshele! Come here this minute! Cheimel! Come right in!" Mottke had long wished to speak to the mother, and ask why she avoided him so. But he feared to provoke her; he desired, rather, to curry her favor. He therefore affected not to notice anything unusual in her behavior.

One evening, just after the lamps had been lighted and the guests were beginning to gather, Mottke appeared in the Warsaw Café. The noise of the conversation, which could be heard upon the sidewalk, suddenly subsided at Mottke's entrance. It seemed as if they had been talking of him. Mottke, however, followed by all eyes, walked straight to the alcove and called out Cheimel, the five-year old brother of Channele. Cheimel had formed an attachment for Mottke, and ran to him with glee; Mottke asked him something. One of the cadets in the café called this to the attention of the mother, who was now standing behind the counter in place of Channele; whereupon the woman cried out, "Cheimel! What are you doing here? Go right back to the kitchen!"

The child obeyed, and Mottke was cut to the quick. He walked over to the woman, and restraining his anger as much as he could, asked, "Why do you chase him away from me so? Are you afraid that I'll eat him up?"

"No, Kanarik. Who ever thought such a thing?" answered Channele's mother, blanching with fear.

For a moment Mottke was silent, then suddenly broke out. "Where is Channele?"

The woman was now as pale as a sheet. Despite her great fear for Mottke she could no longer restrain herself from showing this fellow once for all how much she despised him. Let it cost her what it might, he must rid himself of all pretensions to Channele.

"What business have you inquiring after Channele, anyway?" she demanded, angrily.

He was silent, and looked at the woman.

"You've got no business asking after my child, do you understand? Don't imagine that because I have to make my living in this disgraceful way that anybody at all may come courting my children; my child isn't of the sort that you belong to, or the sort that comes in here. Unfortunately I must make my living from them. But that can't be helped." And she began to weep, wiping her eyes with a corner of her apron.

Mottke stood there, uncertain as to what to do or say. He was deeply cut by the woman's words, yet he did not dare to reply in kind, for fear of alienating her for good. Before his eyes arose Channele, with those black braids of hers, and his heart overflowed with yearning for her. Suddenly he was seized with pity for himself and for his mother, who had been insulted, and he banged his fist down upon the counter so that everything shook. "What do you think?" he shouted. "Do you think that I'm a mahmzer? I've got a mother, too!"

The woman, frightened at his fury, began to pacify him. "Who's saying anything against your mother? God forbid. Of course you have a mother! What Jew hasn't a mother, — may she live to be a hundred and twenty!"

"I thought . . . Well, there'd have been trouble if anybody said a word against my mother. There'd have been trouble . . . " Mottke thrust a clenched fist before the woman's nose, and she shrunk away from him.

He turned from the woman and thought for a while. He wanted to do something to show everybody in the café that Mottke had a mother. On the impulse of the moment he called in Dobrish, who happened to be passing by. She entered, dressed in her night jacket,

her lips and cheeks rouged, and asked, in a frightened voice, "What do you want?"

"Sit down here," said Mottke, pointing to a chair. "Sit down here and take pen and ink, and write a letter to my mother."

Dobrish knew how to write Yiddish and she was the scribe of the establishment. To her came all the women who wished to unburden their hearts upon paper.

A youngster soon fetched some writing paper from a store across the way, Cheimel brought pen and ink from the kitchen, and Dobrish took the pen, asking, "What shall I write?"

"Write like this." And Mottke began to dictate in a loud voice so that everybody in the café should hear. "Write like this: 'To my dear, loving mother.' Have you got that down already? Continue: 'I send you twenty-five roubles.' " And Mottke, translating words into action, took out a twenty-five rouble note and placed it upon the table with a thump. "Twenty-five roubles," he continued, "and buy yourself a new wig, a pair of shoes and a shawl. Don't buy a thing for father, because he used to beat me when I was a child. Use every kopeck of this money for yourself. I am in Warsaw and have a good trade. I am a shoe operator. I make a lot of money and am soon going to be engaged. I am getting a beautiful girl, from a very respectable family, and when we marry I'll come on a visit to you, and I'll bring you nice presents. . . . "

"Woe is me!" sobbed the woman behind the counter, as she heard Mottke dictate the letter to his mother.

At another table sat Shlayme Shlossenhacker's sattelite Yaysef the Monkey and his gang. For a long time they had been poking fun at Mottke for his recent change,

and now, as they heard the letter that Mottke was dictating so pompously, they pinched one another and snickered, cracking jokes now and then at the expense of Mottke's mother. Mottke continued to dictate his letter, aware of the raillery going on behind him. He listened to every remark that was passed, but did not allow this to interrupt his letter.

"And when people see how well-dressed Red Zlattke is on Saturdays, when she goes to the synagogue, let them burst with envy . . ." he continued to dictate to

Dobrish.

"Do you hear what they call her?" said the henchmen to one another. "Red Zlattke. She's one of the real things."

But Mottke had been looking about for a table at which no one was sitting, and at the words "prepare to receive us for the holidays," he seized a table by two of its legs, shook off everything that had been standing upon it and threw it over the heads of the men.

"Who dared to make fun of Red Zlattke?"

A moment later he held Yaysef in his grip. The latter, bruised and bleeding, wriggled like a fish out of water.

"So it was you that was poking fun at Red Zlattke, eh?" he asked, as he struck Yaysef in the face. "Kneel down on the floor, — that's the way." And he kicked the fellow in the shins until he sank down. "Here," said Mottke, pointing to a spot on the dirty floor, "is Red Zlattke's foot. It's Red Zlattke's. Kiss it. Kiss Red Zlattke's foot." He beat Yaysef in the head until the man stuck out his nose and lips, and began to roll his head in the dirt of the floor.

"Let nobody dare to make fun of Red Zlattke. If

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anybody tries it, he'll have to kiss her feet the same way! . . ."

Giving Yaysef a farewell punch, Mottke went back to

his table and resumed the dictation of the letter.

"And I'll bring along a roast goose for you, fresh fish, — and be sure to prepare a fine holiday for us, for me and my bride . . ."

CHAPTER IX

COLONEL COMMISSARY CHVOSTOV

EVER since Mottke had taken it into his head to marry Channele, his women groaned under the oppression of his iron hand. He treated them like so much inanimate goods that was his exclusive property. and was utterly unconscious of any injustice in his actions. His women rarely heard a pleasant word from him. He exacted every kopeck that they received, and drove them to their work as one drives slaves. . . . The girls wondered what had come over him, and they longed for some savior to appear and free them from the bondage in which Mottke held them. They even began to envy Shlavme Shlossenhacker's women. He, at least, took his girls out walking on a Saturday afternoon, and said something to them now and then. But Mottke. ever since he had begun to think of Channele as a bride. kept much to himself and had become exceedingly avaricious.

The street-girls very soon accustomed themselves to obeying their ruler's every mood and caprice, but not so with Mari. The change that had come over Mottke worried and vexed her sorely. She had willingly subjected herself to his ownership because she loved him, and her love had enabled her to endure much from him. But his pretensions to Channele were too much; Mari began to hate him, to grow madly jealous. She felt, indeed, as if Mottke had deceived her; he had gone

part of the way with her, and now he was abandoning her, in the middle of the road, to her own fate. He was walking off without her. And in her heart she swore that she would let him go no further, . . . would stop at nothing to drag him down into the grave wherein he had buried her.

Meanwhile Mottke degraded her still more and even shamed her before the eyes of the other girls. He drove her into the streets with his other women, and took every kopeck from her. And once, when she was sitting with Yaysef in the café, he was apprised of it and before the eyes of all he had slapped her face. The other women, despite the harsh treatment which they now received at Mottke's hands, found consolation in the fact that the Spanish circus-girl was treated no better than they. They even poked fun at her. "He's a wise fellow, is Kanarik. What use has he for a thing like her when he can get a respectable girl right from her mother's home?" And they would not derisively in Mari's direction.

Mari bore all this in silence, and endured Mottke's blows without any show of resistance. She took greater care than ever with her clothes, and made particular efforts to please her patrons. She bought Spanish combs and did her hair up in the very latest style, letting three curls fall over her forehead almost into her eyes. Her waist was cut low in the back, and a generous portion of her bare back was always visible. The Spanish wire-walker began to acquire a most enviable reputation throughout the underworld, and suddenly Velfil's was sought out by guests of unmistakable quality and position, to whom Red Velfil was not at all accustomed. To all this, however, Mottke was oblivious. He was too much preoccupied with Channele.

Soon, however, Mari was raised to such prominence

that Mottke had to take note of it, and he even began to feel jealous. For to Mari came none other than the commissary of the ninth district, ruler supreme over the entire underworld of Warsaw, the redoubtable Vasil Nicolayevitch Chvostov.

The whole quarter in which the "Old City" was situated was virtually in Commissary Chvostov's power. All the stores and businesses belonged to him, - the wine shops, the dry-goods places, the restaurants, the public houses and the cafés chantants. When he started out in the morning on the round of his district, the store-keepers and the owners of brothels would tremble with apprehension. Where would he land next? ... On whom would he cast his eve? He wore holiday clothes and shining boots whose creaking could be heard fifteen vards away; the buttons on his coat shone with imposing refulgence. His neck was as thick as it was red. His beard came down in two points over his breast, across which glistened a row of medals. He walked calmly along, through the streets of his little kingdom, looking with his beady eyes in all directions. so as to make sure that his minions made him proper salute, and that the various store-keepers bowed to him and removed their hats. And should one bold spirit pass by and refuse to bow or remove his hat, the Colonel immediately suspects him and nods to the two officers that walk behind. These worthies at once stop the "revolutionist" and ask him whether he can show a passport. Rarely, however, does such a scandalous event occur to the underworld Gessler. — to the Colonel. as he likes to be called. All his subjects are loval to him, and serve their ruler faithfully. Should he pass by a delicatessen store in whose window are displayed fresh caviare, smoked fish or appetizing fruits, he is tempted by the display. Whereupon he enters the shop, and the owner, his wife and the pretty daughter all run to wait upon the Colonel, who graciously deigns to inspect the fish, caviare and fruits that are offered for his approval, ordering generous quantities to be sent home. The owner, his wife and the pretty daughter treat the Colonel with all the deference due to his high rank, bow before him and fulfil his orders with an anxious smile upon their lips; and when the Colonel resumes his rounds, he is followed by another officer, carrying fresh caviare, smoked fish and the choicest of fruits.

Should the Colonel cast his eye upon some fresh butter in another store, he is again tempted. And soon another officer is following the Colonel-Commissary about, laden with a supply of butter.

Thus, every morning, this ruler of the underworld makes the rounds of his realm. And by the time he returns to his home, the arms of the officers who accompany him are laden with the best of everything that he has spied on his daily journey.

As to the brothels that were situated in his district, the Colonel found it beneath his dignity to bother with them. These he left to the care of the lesser officials who came under his jurisdiction, to the captains and policemen. He was interested only in "The Aquarium" and other aristocratic establishments of dubious character. At the same time, every lesser official held it as part of his duty to inform the Colonel about any woman of particular beauty who, by accident, might be found in the cheaper places. Upon such occasions the Colonel would come to the brothel in person, inspect the remarkable find and decide whether she was worthy of his attention.

Every time the Colonel made his appearance in such a house it was reckoned as a red-letter day. The owner of the place would pride himself upon his distinguished visitor and upon the quality of his human merchandise, while the inmates themselves would feel that somehow or other they were better than the inmates of other

places.

The self-same good fortune befell Mari. Scarcely had the Colonel looked upon her, when he was so violently smitten that he visited her every night. He came to her, to Red Velfil's establishment at night, when all the other girls were out on the street. To Velfil's house the Colonel would send from various stores the best of wine and fish and fruits. The poor, underfed children of the entire neighborhood began to look better as a direct result of the food which the girls shared with them, and all the neighbors partook of the Colonel's largess. In the evening the Colonel would come and lock himself, with the Spanish wire-walker, in her room, where he would proceed to get drunk and indulge in the wildest of orgies. He would break every piece of furniture that the room contained, and although his visits meant only danger and damage to Red Velfil's place, vet the latter felt a great pride in the Colonel's condescension, and believed himself highly honored. The denizens of the quarter began to come to Velfil and beg him to put in a good word for them to the Colonel; for Velfil had become quite influential with that potentate....

At first Mottke's only concern in regard to the Colonel-Commissary was that this fellow was cheating him out of all the proceeds which he could ordinarily realize from Mari. The Colonel visited her every evening and Mottke made next to nothing from her. But soon the

affair began to vex him for more personal reasons, and one night, when the Colonel was locked with Mari in her room, and the clinking of glasses was louder than usual, Mottke was seized with jealousy. He began to yearn for the Spanish wire-walker,—to recall the nights they had spent in the woods, and how she used to steal into the wagon-booth beside him; before his eyes there arose the picture of that night in the forest, when both he and Mari had cast the silent form of Kanarik into the stream. . . .

Mottke did not care to recall that scene; he felt strange every time he thought of it, despite the fact that he did not understand the deed, and could not feel the real horror and guilt of it. To him it was the unpleasant recollection of a duty which he had had to perform. But every time that the scene came to his mind Mari seemed to be ever so near to him, — as if he had married her on that eventful night and she had become his wife forever: or as if he had then been born anew with her. and she was his sister; he felt so intimately, so closely bound to her that he must never part with her, happen what would. Since Channele had awakened a new feeling in him, and he had taken it into his head to marry her, he had become indifferent to Mari. Yet scarcely had Channele gone out of his sight, and her mother poured out her wrath upon his head, when Mottke was ready to abandon all idea of ever marrying at all, and bethought him once more of the Spanish girl. In this he was further impelled by the Colonel. The latter's frequent visits, the nights that he spent with Mari, and the presents that he lavished upon her, made Mottke so jealous of his first love that he purged his mind of all wedding thoughts and began again to pay attentions to the wire-walker.

It was by no means a difficult task to win her back. At his very first words, his bashful smile and his taking her by the hand, she forgave him completely. She belonged to him again, body and soul. She felt that Mottke was her fated partner, her husband, her brother and her ruler, who could do with her what he pleased and lead her whither he desired.

But here was the Colonel in their way. They began to plan how to get rid of him.

CHAPTER X

MOTTKE YEARNS FOR CHANNELE .

A BALL was being neid in Market and his women. that Mottke had given for himself and his women. There were fruits, — as many as the stores in the vicinity could supply; Mottke's royal generosity knew no bounds, for the food had been sent in by the Colonel from the various shops that came under his sceptre. On what was left over from his daily gifts the children of the cigarette-maker had waxed strong and healthy. as indeed had the whole neighborhood. Had Mottke so wished, he might have given a ball every day, and under the same auspices. But the present ball was indeed a great occasion. For on that day Channele had come back to the café, and Mottke wanted to show both her and her mother that he cared not a fig for either: that he had been a fool ever to have thought of courting such a simpleton of a girl, who had dared to refuse Kanarik. He was bent upon showing that Kanarik had need of nobody, that Kanarik feared nobody, not even the Colonel-Commissary. For wasn't Kanarik even now drinking the wine that the Colonel had sent in for his own parties, and wasn't he taking the Spanish girl away from him? Yes, he would take her away from this place and for his sake she would throw away even a Colonel-Commissary.

Mottke, half-dressed, lay sprawling on the bed, king of his domain. Before him, upon a table, stood bottles of wine, liqueurs and cognac and at his right sat the Spaniard herself. She wore a most becoming silk dress. trimmed with lace, extremely decolleté, her arms and throat bare: from her ears, in the fashion of all the singers, dangled ruby ear-rings set with diamonds, which she had received as a gift from the Colonel-Commissary. Mottke himself placed upon her finger the diamond ring which he had bought for Channele. Drunk from the assortment of rare wines and liqueurs. Mottke chased out all the girls whom he had but shortly before invited in to witness that he had become reconciled with the Spanish girl, that she was again their queen, and let them burst with envy. This was in accordance with Mari's desire. And now he was left alone with her. She danced for him, and must do everything for him just as she did for the Colonel. . . . She danced in her most alluring poses. Mottke sat like a king. sipped his wine and surveyed his kingdom. She had to call him Colonel. He began to imagine that he was indeed the Colonel.

"Who am I?" he asked.

"Colonel-Commissary of the 9th District, City of Warsaw."

"And how do you salute a Colonel-Commissary?" asked Mottke, imitating that official.

"Like this." And she brought her hand to salute. Her proud, dark-skinned body, the black silk stockings and the ruby ear-rings, as she stood there like a soldier before him, fascinated him, and when he recalled that she did all these things for the Colonel, too, he became more jealous than ever, and fairly shouted, "And how do you address a Colonel-Commissary?"

"His Highness Colonel-Commissary Vasil Nicolayevitch Chyostoy!"

"No! Mottke-Kanarik!" exploded Mottke.

"Mottke!" cried the girl in fright, hearing his name linked to that of the dead man. Before her eyes flashed the scene of the murder and suddenly she felt like a woman that recalls her wedding night.

"And you love a Christian, a Commissary! Cholera seize him! A Chvostov, the devil take him! And you do these things for him every night. . . . Away from me!" And he thrust her violently, scornfully from him.

"Mottke darling, who says I love him? He nauseates me. What can I do? He's taken a liking to me and pesters the life out of me. Take me away from this place. Lead me off so that he'll never find me."

"Take you away? He should live so! Mottke runs away from nobody. They all run away from him. I'll see to it that your Colonel-Commissary never comes here again."

"As we did with Kanarik, eh? Kanarik was a Colonel-Commissary, too," laughed the girl.

Mottke turned pale and clapped his hand over her mouth.

"Silence! Don't mention that fellow. He got his deserts. He is dead, and you mustn't make fun of a dead person. Do you hear? I'll take his part if you do. I'm named after him—Kanarik."

The girl looked at Mottke and could not understand what he meant. Suddenly he became grave and was lost in deep thought.

"What's the matter, Mottke love?" asked Mari, tenderly.

"Listen, Mari. You know that there in that stream lies Kanarik. We threw him into it and we left. He wanted to run off with you, but I went with you instead. He was called Kanarik; that's my name now. Here in

my bosom I carry his passport. And I am he. I have neither father nor mother: I am Kanarik. Exactly as he was. Kanarik left with you and is still with you. We must stick by each other, closely, like this," - and he brought his palms flat together, - "exactly as if we were married that night. At all costs, we must stick. ... Otherwise it will go ill. If I should stop being Kanarik. I am afraid he would return, — that he would arise from the stream and return to us, avenge himself upon me and take you, too. So whatever happens, Mari. — whatever happens between us, let us stick together. I am Kanarik and you are a wire-walker. Let them offer me thousands of dollars, I'll refuse to

wouldn't sell vou. I wouldn't sell vou. I married vou and you are mine forever."

sell you. I was offered a big amount for you. But I

They came close to one another and looked into each other's eves. In his glance shone the terror of the murder in which they had both had a hand, the secret of the sins which they had committed, and it was as if those sins bound them together. Not a word did either speak; for a long time they looked deeply into each other's eyes and once again they lived through the experiences of that night, when Kanarik lay in the stream, and Mottke had heard his name called. . . .

"Mottke darling, take me away from here. For God's sake, take me away. I don't want to look upon

that Colonel's face again!"

"You little goose you, - I'll see to it that he stops pestering you. I'll steal in sometime when he's here. with my face masked; I'll take his revolver from him and chase him out into the streets without his clothes. Just wait and see what I'll do to that fellow!"

"Just as you did with the Polish gentleman that time," laughed Mari. "Do you remember?"

He took her upon his knees and they began to ridicule the Colonel-Commissary and the whole vicinity that feared him so. They worked out various schemes for playing tricks upon him and then making their escape.

"Mottke dear, let's leave Warsaw altogether. May fires consume it. Let's be hurdy-gurdy performers as before. . . . I long for the wire. . . . Do you remember how all those wealthy landowners used to follow me into the towns and market-places? Mottke! What have you made of me?" And she began to cry.

"Hush, little silly. I'll place you in a cabaret, or in some big circus, or similar place. You'll work for wealthy people. You'll make a pile of money. I'll dress you like a princess. You'll see, Mari."

"Mottke dearest, Mottke my own . . . "

Suddenly, from the corridor, came the sound of a girlish voice: "Cheimel, Mayshele, come down to eat. You'll have to be going to school right away." Mottke turned pale. He had recognized the voice. It was Channele. She had already been brought back, as her parents thought that Kanarik had by now abandoned all notions of claiming her hand. Mottke had not yet seen her since her return, and this was the first time that he heard her voice. It awoke within him a fountain of emotions and memories, and of a sudden he felt strange anxiety. It was as if he were a thing unclean; a deep disgust came over him for the wines and the cognacs, for the naked girl, for himself, for his whole life. . . . But he laughed and tried to banish the thoughts from his mind. He drank down another glass of cognac and kissed Mari on the breast. But again came the feeling of disgust: this very body that now he kissed was pawed over by a different person every night. . . . Before his eyes arose the picture of the corpulent Colonel-Commissary. And now the remembrance of Channele came upon him more powerfully than ever, — her black hair and the purity that looked out of her eyes, — and he yearned for her dear dark head.

He could stay in the room no longer. He dressed and went down. He could not enter the café, however: he was ashamed to look Channele in the face. He peeked in through one of the window panes and could catch a glimpse of her in the kitchen. She was standing near the table, giving her little brothers their breakfast and saving something to them that he could not make out. He could see her black hair, and how she combed it in a part, - could see her hands and arms as she placed a plate before one of the twins and spoke a few words to him with that enchanting smile of hers. He could see no more, nor did he wish to. A longing welled up in his heart; he walked away. For a long time he tramped aimlessly through the streets until he came to the iron bridge; here he sank down at the edge of the Vistula and looked into the water, lost in thought. Anger was coming over him. — anger against a certain somebody that he himself could not name. And then he decided that he was angry with Kanarik who lay there in the woods at the bottom of the stream. He picked up a few stones and began to throw them into the river, as if he were casting them upon Kanarik. "It's all his fault that I killed him! All his fault!"

He began to smile. Before him arose the picture of Channele busy with supper on a Sabbath night. He, Mottke, her husband, has just come home from his journey—he is a driver—and brings passengers to town late Friday. He has come into the house with his dirty boots, and the floor is swept clean, covered with sand for the Sabbath. Channele scolds him for bringing so much dirt into the house, but his mother, who lives with them, comes in with a basin of hot water for him to wash himself with. . . . He smells the odor of the fish that's cooking in the kitchen, of the white bread on the table, — and he is the head of this household! He, Mottke, goes to the synagogue with a prayer-book under his arm. . . . He smiles at the picture and at himself. . . .

And then his ill-humor returned. Who was it that stood in his way and kept him from fulfilling his dreams? Why had they made of him that which he now was? Above all, who? Who? It was everybody: the whole world had wanted Mottke to be a thief and a vagabond. - had wanted Mottke to slay Kanarik and then waste his life in the company of lewd women and not be able to have a wife of his own. — a mother of his own. The whole world had wanted him to have a brothel for a home and a prostitute for a bride, to whom there came every night a Colonel-Commissary. It dawned upon him that the entire universe, the sun, the heavens, the earth and all its people, had committed a gross injustice against him - had conspired to make him what he was . . . he blamed everything and everybody, except himself. He looked upon himself as spotless, clear of all guilt. And he determined that just because the world wanted Mottke to continue his low life in the brothels and not be able to have a girl like Channele as his wife, he would show them that he didn't care a fig for the whole troop of them - he would succeed despite them all. . . . Not on their account would he become a respectable person! For they were nothing but a bunch of thieves and vagabonds themselves! No, it would be merely for his own sake. He wanted to have a wife all his own, his own mother and his own home, and let the world burst with envy. . . . And if Kanarik did not like it, let him lie and rot at the bottom of the stream.

Then Mottke began to feel as if Kanarik were a living person and were wrestling with him. Mottke again seized some very large stones and threw them into the Vistula as if he were casting them upon Kanarik's corpse. He would sell the wire-walker this very day. As for the other girls, he would dispose of them to Shlavme Shlossenhacker for a mere trifle. Whatever Shlavme would offer, he would accept. He would put all his money together and look about for some respectable business: perhaps he would buy a horse and wagon, or else deal in shoes — that detail could be arranged easily enough. But once and for all he would see to it that nothing should stand in the way of his taking a wife, having a mother for himself and a home all his own. Just in spite of "them," because "they" did not wish it.

With his habitual directness in the accomplishment of things which appeared right to him, he arose to execute his determination: he would become a respectable person in spite of the whole world.

CHAPTER XI

THE MARKET FOR HUMAN MERCHANDISE

IN the neighborhood of Velfil's brothel there lived a barber-surgeon named Yankele Sherer. In his barber-shop, just as in the Warsaw Café, would congregate the cadets and brothel owners of Warsaw's underworld. But while the Warsaw Café was used merely as a place in which to pass the time pleasantly. Yankele Sherer's barber-shop was really the Stock Exchange of the brothels. It was here that the business deals were carried through, here that one owner sold a woman to another, or leased her, or made an exchange: this was a market for human merchandise. More than once a cadet would lead a customer into the "small room." which Yankele had at the rear of his place, and which was approached by the descent of a few steps. Here the customer would inspect some woman as in a slave market and determine whether she was worth the price that was asked. . . .

The time of the great market had arrived, and Yankele's place seethed with activity. Important customers had come, — the big dealers whose fingers sparkled with diamonds and who purchased goods for export to distant countries. . . . The people paid liberally for their purchases and to this market the whole underworld looked forward, the girls as well as their cadets, for at such times many of them were liberated from the

Old City and emerged into the great world, sailing across the ocean to wealth and prosperity. Today all was quiet; not a girl was to be seen upon the street, and gradually the cadets themselves disappeared.

All are guarding their business interests. They tremble lest some of the big customers should fall into the hands of the police, in which case the whole trade would be ruined.

But they have little indeed to fear. The customers are guarded by the police themselves. Colonel-Commissary Chvostov, who knows very well when the "Turkish" customers arrive, sends two of his most trusted officers to keep watch over the street where the Stock Exchange is in session. The officers walk up and down and shield the place from intrusion.

Yankele's place is indeed busy today. His wife has been up since very early in the morning, when she went to the market and bought an extra large supply of fish and geese. The odor of her cooking makes the mouths of passers-by water. She is preparing geese for the customers.

In the small room, whose windows look out upon a grey wall, sit the traders upon two beds heaped high with pillows and bedclothes. They are a stout, elderly woman whose fingers and fat neck that rolls over her chest are covered with diamonds and pearls, and a young man also lavishly bedecked with diamonds. He seems to be consumptive; his fingers long and thin; he smokes one cigar after the other, curling the ends of his moustache and looking nervously about. He is the woman's son. They speak to each other in a Spanish jargon mixed with Turkish words and scraps from every tongue spoken on the continent, so that the bystanders may not know what they are talking about. When they speak

to the other people they use Yiddish, although with their swarthy faces and their dark brown eyes they look more like Orientals than like Jews. They exchange very few words with the owners of the brothels and the cadets. For the most part they discuss things with each other, and their first inquiry, when a girl is suggested for their approval is whether she is a blonde. If she is, they pay whatever price is asked without any pretense at haggling. Before them on a table lies a heap of women's photographs, some in respectable poses, like that of any marriageable Jewish daughter; others in wanton, nude posture. . . . Mother and son look over the photographs nonchalantly, listen to the praises of the various girls from their owners and shake their heads. They look at each other, exchange a few words in their conglomerate lingo, and the deal is made.

Yankele Sherer was chief broker on the Exchange. He was a big-boned Jew, tonsured in the style of the hurdy-gurdy gentry, with a protruding abdomen and two deep dimples in his cheeks. He addressed the woman as "Auntie" and called her son "Cousin." They had confidence in him, because he was a relative. Every once in a while Yankele's wife would come into the room with a saucer of preserves, a bottle of schnapps or a couple of oranges.

"Won't Auntie take something into her mouth?" she would ask, with a genial smile. "Won't Cousin refresh himself with a bite?"

Yankele would ask his wife to leave the visitors alone, but she would reply, "What do you mean? They've been talking business since early morning. They must be awful hungry."

The Auntie smiles graciously at Yankele's wife and

tastes the preserves, passing them to her son, to whom she says something in Turkish.

Generally, however, while the market was in progress, there was little time for such a trifle as eating. Business consumed every moment. Some of the merchandise, about whom no agreement could be reached because the price asked was too high, were sent for in person. At such a time most of the people would disappear, so as not to be witnesses of what occurred. Only the mother and her son remained. Suddenly a door would open and a girl would appear.

"Does Gedaliah Glazer live here?" the girl would ask.
"Yes. Gedaliah Glazer lives here. Come in, my dear child."

Mother and son would scrutinize the girl and cast significant glances at each other in regard to "Gedaliah Glazer."

Although the girl knew perfectly well what was going on, and desired most earnestly to be bought by the woman, all talk would be carried on in terms of "Gedaliah Glazer."

For greater security, a pack of cards lay always upon the table. In case, through some error, the police should surprise them, they were playing cards, that's all. . . .

But only rarely would a girl have to inquire for "Gedaliah Glazer;" for the most part customers took the word of the dealers. No business is carried on with such complete reliance of both buyer and seller upon each other's word. None would here dare to practise deceit. Here word and deed are one, and each guards the business as if it were the apple of his eye. Not only the merchants; the merchandise itself exercises a similar

care. More than anyone else, the girls themselves are happy when market time comes around.

The monotonous life of the girls in the brothels becomes so tedious that the inmates long for a change. — for some event that will take them out of the narrow confinement of their rooms into the great world. The name of Buenos Avres, Argentine, is bruited about and becomes almost a legend of a place across the ocean where the girls are free and make fortunes off the black population. Moreover, the girls in Buenos Ayres easily find husbands and themselves soon become the head of their own establishments. Why, all these rich customers that come from Buenos Ayres were themselves once no higher in the world than they. Many of the girls that have left Warsaw write letters to their former chums in which they tell how rich they are becoming and they send money home to gladden the hearts of their parents and provide dowries for their younger sisters. They have gold teeth, they write, and use gold tooth-brushes for cleaning them. . . . Tales are current about girls who left for Buenos Ayres, there to have some black prince or sultan fall in love with them. and now are living like queens.

Because of such legends all the girls longed to be sold to some one from Buenos Ayres. And when the word would be passed around that purchasers had arrived from Argentine the whole underworld throbbed with excitement and anticipation. All the girls would dye their hair blonde, and bedeck themselves in their brightest colors. They knew that blondes were quickly bought up, because the negroes of Buenos Ayres preferred that type. . . .

Happiest of all now were Mottke's women. The rumor had spread that Kanarik was going to sell, and

surely enough his girls had transformed themselves into striking blondes. Mottke sold them with a light heart. He was not permitted to enter the Exchange in Yankele Sherer's shop. His standing as a dealer was not high enough or secure enough to permit of his being introduced to the Argentine customers or to "Gedaliah Glazer," as they were called for purposes of secrecy. Mottke did not even know where the market was situated. The deal was put through by Red Velfil. At any rate Mottke received, in the argot of the underworld, "a wallet with hundreds in it." Such luck a fellow has! Just when he makes up his mind to sell his women along come the buyers from Buenos Avres! It was rumored throughout the Old City that Kanarik had become a rich man, and had received a fat roll of money for his goods. Everybody envied him.

"But what'll he do without his women?" asked one.

"Don't worry about him. He'll get others very soon."

"Nonsense. He's going out of the business altogether. He's going to marry Channele."

"But she doesn't want him."

"She'll want him now, all right. As long as he's got a roll of money she'll want him, never you mind."

"And what has he done with the Spanish girl?"

"He wanted to sell her, too, but Red Velfil wouldn't let him. He's afraid of the Colonel-Commissary," was the reply. "Red Velfil wouldn't allow her to be sold. He was offered all kinds of money, but he wouldn't budge."

Such was the conversation that might be heard in the Warsaw Café and all over the Old City. And everybody was happy; the Argentine customers had left a trail of joy behind them. Mottke's pockets were full of money and Red Velfil had made a good commission, but most of all the merchandise itself was joyous at having been sold. Dressed in their brightest colors, their hair dyed blonde, they no longer paraded the streets to earn money for their owners. They were preparing for a long journey to a distant land, where dark princes, who loved Jewish blondes, were waiting for them. The princes would fall in love with the girls, each of whom dreamed of very soon becoming the queen of a black kingdom.

CHAPTER XII

MOTTKE BECOMES A RESPECTABLE PERSONAGE

THE time finally arrived when the merchandise must be packed off to Argentine. Whereupon the girls began to weep and say farewells to their friends and acquaintances throughout the neighborhood. There was such lamenting and crying in the home of the cigarette-maker that one would have thought it was the Day of Atonement. Hither the girls had come to say their last good-bye to the sick woman and her children, and amidst the tears they found voice to wish each other the best of good fortune.

"Don't forget me on the other side of the ocean. And when you've made the trip safely remember me and the children."

"Forget you? Why, you were more to us than our own mother, more than a sister," the girls replied. "We'll never forget you."

"Here, keep these for the children," said the girls, offering the invalid all the dresses which they were not taking along.

But one of them gave none of her clothes away. This was the Lovitcherin, Dobrish, who kept her clothes intact in the trunk, looking forward someday to needing them for her own household.

"How are you ever going to get that trunk of clothes across the border?" asked some of the girls. "And what use will they be to you if you do get them over? Why, across the ocean you can buy all that dirt cheap."

Dobrish, however, paid no attention to them. "Clothes always come in handy." She refused to sell her linens or to give them away as parting gifts. It seemed to her that if she were to give away her clothes she would at the same time surrender every hope of ever leading a different life, of marrying and conducting a respectable household. The chest of clean, fresh clothes had become to her the symbol of her own purity . . . of her great hope. . . . So she guarded the immaculate material and took it with her to that black kingdom where she expected soon to be a black ruler's queen.

"Remember, as soon as you're safe across the border, with God's help, send me and the children a postcard," begged the sick woman, calling after the girls as they

disappeared for the last time.

The children fell about the necks of the prostitutes and wept at the departure of their "aunties" with the genuine tears of childhood.

The whole street followed the departing women with glances of compassion. Everybody knew their destination, and many pitied them not for the horrible fate that waited them in the distant land, but for the long journey over the wide ocean, which they all feared. Others, indeed, envied them and wished that they were in the girls' place, for were they not sailing to a land where gold was shoveled up in the streets? These envious ones would themselves have gone, had they the money for the passage. . . . One and all, the denizens of the underworld wished the girls godspeed and safe arrival in the land where the black man ruled. . . .

And now Mottke was no more a cadet, but had become a respectable person. He began to dress in civilian fashion, like all the other young men of standing, in a new suit, collar and necktie, and a gold watch and chain: thus arrayed he would stroll through the streets of the underworld. And now happened a remarkable thing: scarcely did the slums become aware that Mottke had money, that he had received a big roll from the Argentine customers, and that he had turned over a new leaf and decided to become a man like any other. when all ceased to hold him in awe. None of the brothel owners stopped to speak with him. That veil of secrecy which had seemed to enfold him, while he owned the women and everybody on the street trembled before Kanarik, crossing to the other side when he was seen approaching, now fell away. No longer was he avoided. When he entered a shop to make a purchase the shopkeeper no longer deserted his place in terror. Mottke was soon accepted as one of the respectable residents of the district.

Since Mottke had entered the circle of respectable Jews he had not stepped into the Warsaw Café, but he kept a close watch upon Channele none the less. He would wait for the evening, when she gave supper to her little brothers, and then he would steal into the vard and peep through the kitchen window. At the mere sight of her shapely head and the long tresses that flowed over her shoulders there came over him a feeling of purity which was rich compensation for all that he was sacrificing for her. In that black head of hers he could see mirrored that whole future life of which he was so fondly dreaming -and her head of hair became associated in his mind with something else that was exceedingly dear to him, something out of the past that somehow linked itself with his dreams of the future. Channele's head of hair recalled to him his mother's face. Indeed, it was impossible for him to think of Channele without the image of his mother arising beside that of his beloved. The two women became to him one. And he loved them as if they were a single person.

Still more remarkable: Mottke began to feel a deep displeasure at the thought that Channele must stand in the Warsaw Café night after night serving the low type of customers that frequented the place. Of a sudden the debasement of the brothel district and of the café itself overwhelmed him, and he wanted Channele, his Channele, to be taken far, ever so far away from such surroundings. He wanted her mother to send her off to her uncle, just as she had done when they wanted to hide Channele from him. . . . He desired her to be hidden away somewhere beyond possibility of discovery. Not even he was to know where she had gone.

He was not yet ready to send a shadchan to Channele's father, for Mari was still in his way. The Spaniard was yet at Velfil's brothel, where every evening the Colonel-Commissary came to her. Mottke's heart was torn between the two girls, and he could not sell Mari as light-heartedly as he had disposed of his other women. The others had been to him mere merchandise: the wire-walker, however, was, as it were, closely related to him — a living creature, one of his own. This consideration he felt strongly, and he deliberated upon it for a long time, but he knew that he could never win Channele unless he could rid himself of the Spanish girl, - tear her out of his existence. It was now his one ambition, his pride, to have a wife, a wife he could honestly call all his own, and a mother all his own, just like any other person. He meant to come to Channele with a pure heart and clean hands.

For many days he struggled with himself, until at last he came to Mari and opened his heart to her. He spoke to her like a brother to a sister, like one soul to another.

"Mari," he began, "we must part. I'm going away from here."

"Mottke! What are you saying!" she gasped in fright. "You're going to get married? Are you?"

"Yes," he replied.

"Why?"

"I don't know. I must. I want to. I can't do otherwise."

She looked at him in amazement. His love for Channele was plainly mirrored in his eyes. Tears came to them; his mouth twitched nervously and a tell-tale pallor spread over his cheeks. Mari, who truly loved him, could restrain herself no longer; she threw herself upon him and kissed him with such fervor that her teeth bit into his lips.

"Mottke, my darling. No matter what you do—I'll love you just the same."

"Love me or not, I know that my life is in your hands. You have the power to give me over to the Colonel-Commissary by telling him that I murdered Kanarik,—that my real name is something else, and that I hold a false passport. Inform against me, if you wish. But I'll marry Channele in any case, even if I know that before long I'll be dead and buried. I want to marry her; after that you can have me sent to Siberia to do hard labor, if you wish. But I'll marry Channele; you can depend upon that."

Mari was seized with an intense jealousy of Mottke's love. She flamed with resentment against the café girl. Her small teeth bit; into her thin lips; she clenched

her fists and became so weak that she had to lean against Mottke.

"Why can't you have me together with Channele?" she asked. "Steal her away. This very night steal her away and bring her here. You'll get a lot of money for her, and we'll both love you, — both . . . work for you . . ."

Mottke turned pale. His heart began to palpitate wildly. For often the selfsame thought had come to him, and he had banished it from his mind in fright. Yet the thought had remained deep in his subconsciousness, and now Mari had dragged it to the surface. He maintained a brooding silence, and within him the spirit of evil waged combat with the spirit of good.

"I'll persuade her," urged the Spanish girl. "I know how to talk to her. I'll see to it that she agrees. You'll see. She'll agree."

Suddenly before Mottke arose the picture of his mother sitting in a corner of the cellar and sewing his pants. In another corner lay Mottke himself, naked, covered with some old rags. He had been badly beaten and bruised. He was lying in the corner, looking at his mother and crying softly. He could see her face now just as clearly as he had seen it then, with the tears rolling over her sunken, sallow cheeks; her lips were so dry, and the veins of her thin neck made such a delicate blue network, just like a hen. And her eves rolled, like those of a hen that the slaughterer has just placed between his knees, ready to kill. . . . And then. in some manner which he could not describe. Channele was transformed into his mother, and his mother into Channele, - both, as it were, a single soul, a single body: and it seemed to him that whoever sought to harm Channele sought to harm his mother as well.

Harm his mother! The very thought of this so incensed him that he forgot everything else. He knew that his life was in Mari's hands, but this did not deter him.

"Close your mouth!" he shouted, stamping his foot.
"What do you think, — Channele is you? Come with
me this minute! Come on . . . come on . . ." he
commanded.

"Where?" she asked, in terror.

"What business is it of yours? What right have you to ask? Do you think I'm going to leave you here with a Colonel who'll take away every kopeck you earn? Come along. This very minute, I say. I'll take you to the 'Aquarium.' You'll become a chansonettke, a singer. Then, at least, you'll have something for your work. Not for me. Not for me. I don't need your money. It'll all be for yourself, do you hear? And see to it that you rise to something, — not wallow around in brothels."

Quickly he packed her trunk, grabbing whatever came to his hands, washed clothes and unwashed: silk kaftans, stockings, hats and shoes. That same evening he dragged Mari to the "Aquarium," where he sold her to the "director" just as one sells a favorite dog or horse, receiving two hundred and eighty roubles.

Before leaving, he took Mari by the hand and looked deep into her eyes as he gave her the money which he

had received for her.

"Here. Take it. I don't want a kopeck of it. It's all yours. Buy yourself some beautiful hats."

This hurt the girl more than if he had beaten ber. She threw the money into his face. "I'm your woman," she cried. "You sold me. Then the money belongs to you. Why do you give it to me?"

Mottke thrust the bills into his pocket. "My life is in your hands," he whispered to her. "If you want to, inform the police against me. I don't care. So I'll be sent to Siberia, to do hard labor."

The girl was silent. With her small, sharp teeth she

bit into her red, seductive lips. . . .

CHAPTER XIII

MOTTKE IS ENGAGED TO CHANNELE

TOTTKE bade farewell to the underworld and betook himself to the Grzhibov, where he entered the life of the fishermen that brought frozen fish from the deep lake. Here he bought a horse and wagon in partnership with another fellow about his age, and brought the fish from the station to the town. Mottke's name was well known to the drivers; his underworld reputation had preceded him. Hence he was feared by his associates, and had been at once received in their midst. Yet he was not looked down upon, nor were his new friends ashamed to have him among them. His former profession was speedily forgotten, and cropped out only during an occasional quarrel, when someone would remind him of his pedigree. As far as pedigree was concerned, however, there was little reason for the fishermen to argue genealogies with Mottke, and he soon became as prominent a personage in his new home as he had been in the Old City. Already he had a couple of hundred roubles put away in the hands of several jobbers, and he was being considered by one of them as a possible partner in the business. All this had come about at the suggestion of Reb Melech, Channele's father. Since Mottke had received the few hundred dollars for the women that he had sold to the Argentine customers, the old man had kept him under surveillance. Seeing that Mottke was settling down,

and honestly desired to become a respectable member of the community, Reb Melech had talked the matter over with his wife, and expressed the opinion that Mottke would not make such a bad husband for Channele after all.

"Here's a chap with a couple of hundred roubles," he said one day. "Who needs to know what he was? What is he, — a girl? Will it spoil his name? Not at all. A girl must watch her reputation. A fellow may do anything."

"True enough. He brought no child home in his apron," assented the wife. "Why, a fellow like him, if he only means business and settles down, is as fine a one as you'd wish. He can work up to owning a business, too. And he loves Channele better than life. He'd let his eyes be taken out for her."

"Yes. And most important of all, don't forget that he's got a couple of hundred roubles. He can make them grow. Who needs to know how he made the money? It isn't written on his passport. And moreover, my dear wife, money is money; it doesn't smell."

But Reb Melech did not discuss the matter with Mottke. God forbid! He did not even permit himself to be seen with the fellow, lest people discover what Mottke was about. Reb Melech had his lieutenants, however, — certain acquaintances and friends, — who communicated to Mottke just what to do; and it was none other than the old storekeeper Brachyeh, cantor (chazan) of the old synagogue, to whom Mottke had once come for aid in proposing the match to Channele, who now performed the delicate service for Reb Melech.

"A fellow like you, with a couple of hundred roubles in his pocket has no business wandering about the streets in idleness. You might squander it all, or drink it up with good fellows. For there are always plenty of good fellows around when your pockets are full," said the old shadchan once to Mottke, who had again come into his store to urge him to propose the match to Channele's parents.

"Don't you fear. I won't drink up my money. I swear by Channele's life. I won't drink, and I'll keep

an eye on every kopeck."

"Well, then. If you want to be engaged, you ought to look about for a livelihood. Go to the Grzhibov, for instance. Hunt out a partner and buy a horse and wagon. What are you doing here, anyway? You ought to go away from here, so that nobody shall know what you were, — who or when. Do you understand?" asked the shadchan, repeating the words that Channele's father had told him to say to Mottke.

Not until Mottke had been gone from the Old City for quite a while, and the underworld district had forgotten him. - not until he had become "a certain fisherman from the Grzhibov," was he brought together with Channele, in the regular manner by which prospective husbands and wives are introduced to each other. The match was broached by old Brachyeh, and Channele's suitor was heralded as a "certain fisherman from the Grzhibov, a strapping young man, free of military obligations, possessing a couple of hundred roubles and owning a horse and wagon." Reb Melech and his wife agreed to consider the match, and made inquiries about the suitor as if he were a total stranger to them. . . . The "first" meeting of the couple was arranged for the next Saturday, and on Saturday afternoon the young lady and the young gentleman, surrounded by their various relatives, met at the home of Channele's uncle on Pavia Street, the same place to

which Channele had once been sent in order to avoid Mottke's persistent attentions. Mottke sat uneasily in his chair, pale and frightened, dressed in a new suit that seemed to proclaim its wearer's mission: he feared to make the slightest motion with his foot or his hand, lest he break something on the table. Opposite him sat Channele, no less pale and frightened. dressed with equal appropriateness for the occasion. Her hair was combed into two braids, and over her head, like a halo, there seemed to hover an atmosphere of gracious pity. . . . Mottke looked at her and his heart overflowed with tenderness. . . . It seemed to him that she was a fledgling, the same as he used to rob from nests when he was a little scamp. . . . The little bird was trembling with the cold in his hands. beating with its winglets, and he took it and placed it against his bosom, to warm it. . . . Even so would he have liked to place her against his bosom. . . .

The conversation turned to home matters, and the various visitors made friends with the suitor. The father of the bride, desiring to learn some particulars about the family into which his daughter was about to marry, questioned Mottke. Was the suitor's father still living? And his mother?

"I have a mother, a dear, good mother!" blurted Mottke. "When I was a mere kid, a little brat about this high, they wanted to beat me, and my mother wouldn't allow it. And she . . ."

"And how about your father?" interrupted Reb Melech hurriedly, ashamed that the guests at table should hear such vulgar talk from the mouth of his prospective son-in-law.

"He's also living. But I don't like him."

"Where do your folks dwell?"

"In a very small town, in the government of Warsaw, — a place called Zhachlin."

"And what's the bridegroom's Yiddish name?" asked the matchmaker.

"My name is Mottke."

"Mottke?" asked Reb Melech. "That's the first time I hear of it."

"No," Mottke hastened to correct himself. "That's what they used to call me when I was a little boy. My real name is Kanarik,—Meyer Aaron Kanarik. I have a passport right here," he said, producing the passport.

"Meyer Aaron. A good Yiddish name," commented

the matchmaker to Channele's father.

Mottke's heart was rent by a sudden pang. More strongly than ever before it dawned upon him that he bore the strange name of a strange person, and that he had buried his own identity. . . . For the first time he conceived a yearning for his old name, his own name. Never had he felt so great a need of it as now, when he was about to be engaged.

The thoughts brought sadness to Mottke, and he became silent.

"Let's leave them alone," suggested the matchmaker quietly to Channele's parents.

"Young folks, you know. Maybe they want to talk about things that we shouldn't hear," added the aunt. "Come, come," she addressed the guests, "let's go into the next room." From Mottke's silence she had guessed that he wished to be alone with Channele.

Left alone with her, Mottke became more silent, more pale, more frightened than ever. He who had once ruled over four lives was now abashed before this simple girl and could summon no words to his tongue.

Channele was equally helpless; he could hear the beating of her heart. But she was the first to speak.

"It looks as if I am destined to be your bride. The

hand of God seems to be in it."

"And are you willing to marry me?" Mottke asked, in deep embarrassment.

"I'll do exactly as my father and mother tell me. They know best what is good for me," she replied, her gaze directed upon the floor.

"And you'll be willing to marry me?" Mottke repeated.

"I'll tell you the plain truth. I'm very much afraid. Ever so much."

"Afraid of what?" asked Mottke, frightened.

"You know well enough. I'm afraid that you'll return to your old ways. That's no kind of life for me. It would be far better that our match should come to nothing, rather than that we should join our lives forever, before God and man."

These were the very words that Channele's mother had bid her repeat to Mottke, for the purpose of improving the youth. The girl, however, was really afraid

of him, and tears began to glisten in her eyes.

Mottke could find no words with which to reply. He was prompted to fall at her feet and tell everything — to tell it as one confesses to a great Rabbi or to God himself, — to relate his youth and all the secrets of his heart, — to tell her that his real name was not Kanarik, but Mottke, and that he had murdered the man whose name he now bore. He felt that he must confess everything to her; the one thing that kept him from doing so was the fact that there were people in the next room. He bit his lips, his hands trembled, and he stammered incoherently.

"Channele . . . I'll die first . . . I'll commit suicide . . . I'll drown myself before I do a bit of harm to you. . . . I'll be a true husband to you, Channele. You'll see." And Mottke began to weep.

This was more than Channele could bear. "Please don't cry," she begged, pitying him. "I believe you. If I didn't believe you, I'd never consent to become

engaged to you . . ."

He wiped his eyes quickly and mastered his tears. Footsteps were heard in the next room. The guests returned.

"Well? Do you youngsters like each other?" somebody asked.

The couple was silent.

That night the engagement took place. It was a quiet affair, and the only invited guests were ten Jews, who formed the minyan, or quorum prescribed for religious acts and services. Reb Melech did not care to have the news of Channele's betrothal to Kanarik bruited about the Old City too soon. Indeed, he had wished to postpone the betrothal altogether, but Mottke would not consent to such an arrangement. He wished the marriage-contract to be written out at once. When it came to signing the precious document, the matchmaker had to sign for Mottke, — Meyer Aaron Kanarik.

"Mazel Tov, Meyer Aaron! Mazel Tov! Good

luck! Congratulations!" came from all sides.

For the first time the name sounded strangely in his ears. It seemed to him, indeed, that not he, but Kanarik, had just been engaged to Channele. For wasn't Kanarik's name signed at the bottom of the marriage-contract? . . .

CHAPTER XIV

MOTTKE CONFESSES TO CHANNELE

FOR a whole week Mottke and Channele saw nothing of each other, but on Saturday they spent the entire day together. She was at her uncle's for the Sabbath. They went out walking, but not to the Saxon Gardens, where Mottke was too well known; they sauntered along behind the Jewish Hospital near the citadel, where the tall poplars stand and whither wander the tender couples of Warsaw who have things to confide to each other and do not wish to be disturbed. . . . Channele was as yet unwilling to go with Mottke to the Gardens or to the Yiddish theatre; she feared lest he be recognized.

During the few weeks which followed their betrothal they became so intimate that the girl began to teach Mottke manners, just as if he were a little child. So anxious was he to become a respectable personage that he obeyed her implicitly in all things. Channele had so well succeeded that every Saturday Mottke went to the synagogue with her uncle, and he began to dress as befitted his station, in the long coat worn by all orthodox youths. On his lapel he wore a medallion portrait of his betrothed, and another portrait dangled as a watch charm from the chain of the watch which Channele had given him as an engagement present. Moreover, he held aloof from the common teamsters of the fish trade, and stopped going into the tavern with

them for a drink of beer. He sought to associate with the boss fishermen, for this reflected more honor and social prestige upon him. All this, in accordance with Channele's wishes; and her wish to Mottke was law. She communicated her desires so softly, so tactfully, so tenderly, that he could but comply.

"See, Meyer Aaron, you're already an engaged man.

These habits no longer become you."

"Channele, you still address me with the formal 'you'", objected Mottke, taking her by the hand.

"Let it be 'thou,' then," she replied, coquettishly,

lowering her gaze and blushing.

Noticing her lowered gaze and her blush, and hearing the familiar pronoun for the first time from her, Mottke became so entranced that he would gladly have done anything in the world for her.

Yet one other thing vexed him. She still called him "Meyer Aaron" and not Mottke. And when they would go walking at night among the poplar trees by the Warsaw citadel, along the banks of the Vistula, and she would address him as "Meyer Aaron, dear," it would grieve him sorely; it would seem that she did not mean him at all, but Kanarik. He was merely a substitute for Kanarik. Soon the real Kanarik would arise from the bottom of the stream into which he had been cast, and would come hither, take Channele by the hand — and become her sweetheart. And whenever they would sit down upon the grass of the hill behind the citadel, and she would take his head between her cold little hands, placing it upon her lap, kissing him with her cold lips and calling him "Dear Mever Aaron," or "Meyer my love, my own, my own," he would close his eyes and say to himself, ever so softly, "Mottke . . . Mottke . . . Mottke . . . "

It was the first evening of Pentecost and the couple was out walking as usual. Channele, for the holidays. had made herself a pretty skirt and waist with a soft collar, such as was then in the height of fashion. She looked so charming to Mottke in her new outfit that he was thrilled with delight. Mottke, too, was dressed in a new suit, for the date of the wedding was fast approaching and both he and Channele were laying in a supply of clothes. They strolled, as was their wont, towards the citadel. The weather was ideal and the scene, to lovers' eyes, looked like a veritable garden of Eden. The trees, gilded by the sunset, were so beautiful that it was enough to take one's breath away from sheer ecstasy. Arriving at the citadel at their favorite spot amidst the tall poplars, they beheld before them the huge dome of heaven above the green field. The lower half of the sky was yet bathed by the setting sun, while the rest was already immersed in the blue of evening. Across the Vistula the reflection of the fiery ball made of the river a mass of fluid flame. Everything was so bright and free that one's feet seemed to grow wings and the very air was an invitation to dance. The lovers hastened to the muddy pond among the poplars and sat down nearby, reflected in the slimy water. Here they chatted about their approaching wedding, about their future life together; they were laughing and prattling as all young couples will, when suddenly Channele changed the subject.

"Look, Meyer Aaron love, why don't you send for your mother? I'd dearly love to see what she looks like."

"Then you love my mother?" cried Mottke, his heart beating with pleasure.

"Of course I do. That's a funny question. Whom then should I love? She is your mother, isn't she? Then she's mine, too!"

For a moment Mottke's lips betrayed an inner pain. "Tomorrow I'll write her a letter and send her money to come here," he said.

"Yes. I'm ever so anxious to have your mother and mine lead me under the wedding canopy. Otherwise there'll be something missing in the ceremony."

Mottke felt that now he was bound to Channele with stronger ties than ever, — that she had been born with him, that she was not his sweetheart, but a blood relative, ever so close to him, — as close as his mother.

"Meyer Aaron love, I've made the loveliest present for your mother,—a darling black shawl," added Channele. At the sound of his false name Mottke grasped her hand and began to speak with intense resolution.

"Channele, my name is not Meyer Aaron Kanarik. My real name is Mottke. Call me Mottke, I beg you."

"Mottke!" she laughed. "Go on! You're jesting! What kind of name is Mottke? Mottke is a good name for a thief or a vagabond."

"I'm not joking, Channele. I bear another man's name."

"What do you mean, — another man's name. Who ever bears another man's name? You're jesting, I tell you!"

"I'm not jesting, Channele. I'm in dead earnest. I've wanted to let you know this for a long time, Channele, for I must tell you everything before the wedding. Yes, I want you to know it all beforehand, just as if you were my mother. From this day forward I want

you to be like a mother to me. You shall know everything."

The girl sat dumb with apprehension. She could feel that Mottke was about to confess a grave secret of his life, yet despite her uneasiness she desired to learn the exact nature of the lot to which she was about to be united.

"Channele, when you spoke just now so lovingly of my mother, I saw that you and I were ever so intimately related, and that I could confide all to you. Listen to me. Channele. I bear the name of another. Of a person who is no longer on earth. Who has gone from the living. That person did me a wrong. A very great wrong. And that person had a name, while I had no name. I ran away from home when I was yet a very small fellow. Ran away without a name. They beat me. And I struck back. So they looked for me and wanted to give me into the hands of the police. So I ran away. I had no passport, and not to have a passport is the same as having no name. can't show your face among people if you haven't any passport. That person had a name, and a passport, too. I envied him, and used to think how I could get the passport and the name away from him. . . . I thought, and thought, until I did it. . . ."

Channele sat motionless during the recital, while her heart palpitated strangely. She did not feel the moist breath that touched her cheek; she could feel only Mottke's large eyes that seemed to burn right through her, and his warm hand that clasped her own. She could hear, too, his labored breathing.

"And once when he did me a very great wrong,—
for he and a gang of his men beat me up so badly that
I was sick for a long time afterwards,—I found out

that he was plotting to run away with somebody. So I planned with that somebody to lie in hiding on the roadside that night and I saw to it that — he disappeared. Disappeared from the face of the earth. And now I carry his passport next to my heart, and I am called by his name. Don't be afraid. He will never return. He lies secure at the bottom of a stream with a stone tied round his neck. . . . Nobody knows. But I refuse to bear his name any longer. I'll go back to the city where I was born and bribe the officials with a large sum of money to give me a passport in my own name. I'll be called just as my mother called me: Mottke! I want to be known as Mottke . . ."

He stopped in the middle of the sentence. Channele sat in awe, as if lost in a cloud that surrounded her and cut her off from the rest of the world. It seemed that her heart had stopped, and that her senses were paralyzed. Surely she was sleeping, and this was all a night many.

nightmare. . . .

"There. Now you know everything. Everything," he sighed. "Tell me, tell me, are you still willing to marry me? Tell me. To marry Mottke, not Kanarik. Kanarik is dead. . . . Buried. . . . I killed him, — did it with my own hands. . . . I am Mottke . . . Mottke. . . . Tell me, are you willing to be Mottke's sweetheart? Don't be afraid to answer. If you say no, then I'll be off. I'll go away and you'll never see me again."

At the last words the girl came suddenly to herself. She looked about. Night had already descended over the broad meadow. From afar twinkled the lights of the city. She was seized with a sudden fear at being alone with him at night in that forsaken place. All at once she began to shriek in an unearthly voice.

"Mamma! Mamma!" . . .

The sound of her voice frightened Mottke. He jumped to his feet and realized the full import of what he had just done, — knew that he had betrayed himself. He was not sorry, however. On the contrary, he experienced a certain satisfaction and relief. For now nothing weighed upon his conscience.

"Why are you screaming? You'll attract a crowd. Come, I'll take you home. Don't be afraid. I'll not

harm vou."

"Why should I be afraid?" asked the girl. She had rapidly come to the conclusion that it was better to continue playing the rôle of sweetheart. "Aren't you my betrothed? Then why should I fear my own husband-to-be? I was just scared, — that's all."

"Channele, Channele! Do you really mean it?" He sank down upon the grass and clasped her closely

to his bosom.

"Come. Let's be going back," she urged. "It's night already. Mamma'll be uneasy. She won't know what's become of us."

The spring night lay dark and heavy over earth and sky. Through the air wafted the delicate perfumes of the most hidden flowers and plants, and it seemed as if hundreds of nymphs were imprisoned in a garden, filling the air with intoxicating incense that radiated from their maiden limbs. . . . In the night air arose dark spots, like shadows of unseen forms that were walking beside them. Through the darkness and the perfume-laden atmosphere the couple walked to the city, and not a word passed between them. . . .

CHAPTER XV

THE ENGAGEMENT IS BROKEN

As soon as Channele reached home, in terror and confusion, she summoned her parents to her room and related to them, with trembling heart and quivering voice, the secret that Mottke had confided to her: that he bore another person's name,—the name of one whom he had killed. Reb Melech, upon hearing to what a dangerous criminal his daughter had been betrothed, was himself seized with trembling, and for a few minutes lost his power of speech altogether. His wife began to wring her hands and burst into loud wailing.

"Quiet, for God's sake! People will hear you!" admonished Reb Melech.

When the parents had recovered from the first shock, they began to consider what had best be done.

For a long time father and mother eyed each other in mute interrogation, until Channele burst suddenly into hysterical weeping.

"Why should you cry, my dear child? Thank heaven that he told you so soon. What would you have done, God forbid, if he had waited until after the wedding?"

They sought to console Channele, and brought her to another room.

"The first thing we must do," suggested the mother,

when her daughter was gone, "is to hide her from him."

"And I say that the first thing we must do is to go to the Colonel-Commissary and tell him the whole story," replied Reb Melech.

"What do you mean!"

"Just what you hear. What do you think? Do you want the Colonel-Commissary to learn of the affair from some other source, and then drag us and Channele into the crime together with her betrothed? God knows what it'll lead to."

"Why do you frighten me so? How are we to blame? Did we know?"

"That's just why we ought to go to Commissary Chvostov and tell him the whole story: 'Sir, it happened so and so and so. We knew nothing at all about it. Our daughter was engaged to be married to him. As soon as we learned the horrible truth we were the first to come running to you with the tale. We are in no way to blame.'

"I can't consent to such a plan," cried the wife.
"Why should we be the ones to inform against him?"

"And if you don't tell the Commissary about it, do you imagine he'll not learn of it? He'll discover it without you. There'll be others to come to him with the story. If you know it, depend upon it that you're not the only one. There's a long rope waiting for every murderer. If it isn't today, it's a year or two later, when you'll already be related to him by marriage. And then when the truth comes out you'll be dragged into it. And certainly Channele will, too. His own wife, people will say. She knew it all the time and kept it secret. I refuse to let my daughter go to sure ruin. Nothing will stop me. I'm going right over to

the Commissary's and tell him everything. I'll wash my hands clean of it from the very start, and then they can't have anything against my child."

The last words convinced the woman that it was necessary to inform against Mottke in order to save her own daughter. She made no reply to her husband's argument, but wept softly.

They called Channele: her pale, frightened face

clearly betokened her helpless confusion.

"Don't cry. daughter. Thank the good Lord that things happened as they did. You are not his, neither is he yours. Betrothal by no means amounts to marriage. He is henceforth a mere stranger to you."

Channele knew all this very well, but she had already formed a strong attachment for Mottke. He was the first man who had ever kissed her.

"Daughter, we must get rid of this burden so that

we ourselves shall not be dragged into the mess. We must get out of this. We've got nothing to do with it."

When Channele heard from her father that she must accompany him to the Colonel-Commissary and tell that official the entire tale as she had heard it from Mottke she burst into such uncontrollable weeping that her parents grew suddenly apprehensive. Could it be possible that Channele's relations with Mottke had gone beyond those of mere betrothal? . . . The girl pressed her hands tightly to her face and buried her head in the pillow: she refused to see or hear a soul.

"Hindel," sobbed the father to his wife, "I'm afraid. I'm afraid that we're trapped. The young man has

ruined us."

"What crazy notion's entered your head now? She's an innocent child and the young man acted like a pious gentleman to her, like a Rabbi's son."

"I'm afraid we'll have to keep the whole matter quiet now. We're in for it. Just see how she's crying, will you?"

"Melech Benkart, away from me! Leave me alone with the child."

"Take care, Hindel, what you're about. If she's in trouble, then we've got to keep quiet. It's our misfortune. Take care," reiterated Reb Melech, leaving the room. "Daughter dear," entreated the mother, placing the girl's head upon her lap, "tell me, child, for I'm your mother."

"What shall I tell you, mother dear? I've already told you everything."

"Has he done you no wrong?"

"Who, mamma?"

"Mottke."

"No, mamma. He treated me with all respect, and the most he did was to caress my hair and tell me that he loved me, loved me ever so much. He obeyed me in everything. Every Saturday he went to the synagogue with uncle. He even stopped chumming with his former companions. All for my sake, because he was anxious to become a respectable person whom I could respect and love. And the reason he told me this was that he wanted me to know all about him, so that he'd have nothing in his heart hidden from me."

"And he did nothing else to you? Listen, my child. If things have already gone too far between you we'll have to grin and bear it in silence. We'll have to share his guilt in that case, and arrange for an immediate wedding . . . "

"No, no, mother dear. I've already told you that he couldn't have treated me with greater respect. He told me that if God would only be kind enough to

hasten the time when he would be standing under the marriage canopy with me, he would be the happiest man in the world."

"That happiness he'll never know.... Lucky for you, my child, that you never allowed yourself to be misled by him. Melech!" she called to her husband. "What were you babbling about, anyway? What did you want of the poor girl? He treated her with the utmost respect, in every way."

"If that's the case, then his blood be upon his own head! We're free of it all. Come, my child. This

very minute come along with me."

"Where, papa?"

"To the Colonel-Commissary Chvostov. You're to tell him everything, exactly as you told it to me. Everything!"

"Papa!" . . .

"I'll drag you there by force, if necessary. You must save yourself, my child. What has that murderer to do with you? Is he married to you already? The engagement is broken! . . . Henceforth he is a stranger to us. Does he concern us in the least? Come!"

CHAPTER XVI

MOTTKE'S GUARDIAN ANGEL

REB MELECH lost no time in dragging his daughter along to the Colonel-Commissary. He went that very evening. "I won't let that story stay overnight in our home," he cried. In vain were Channele's tears and entreaties; willy nilly, she had to go.

They were unable to find the Colonel either at the police-station or at his home. That worthy spent all his evenings at "The Aquarium," where there had lately appeared the noted Spanish wire-walker, "Dorothea." The papers were full of the newcomer: one might have read in the columns or heard from the connoisseurs that she had the prettiest legs in the world. . . . And Colonel-Commissary Chyostov was a bosom friend of the Spanish beauty. More than one man in the official world envied him his close friendship with the serpentine dancer, with her thin white toes and neatly turned calves that looked, in their silk stockings, like wine poured into a sparkling goblet. . . . There was whispered conjecture as to whence the beauty had come, and how it was that Colonel Chyostov knew her so well. But all this conjecture and inquiry as to whence had come these most entrancing ankles contributed to the charm and popularity of the wire-walker. Everybody envied the Colonel and congratulated him upon possessing "such an attraction." And Colonel-Commissary Chvostov was indeed proud of her.

Reb Melech, failing to find the Commissary either

at his home or his office, guessed that he must be at "The Aquarium," and pulled his daughter thither. His wife tried to urge him to postpone the matter until the following day. He was obdurate.

"You silly goose," he argued. "The sooner we tell, the better for us. Who knows what can happen by tomorrow? Maybe he'll think things over and regret that he ever confessed. Then he'll make his escape, or worse still, do us some harm—implicate us.... Now is the time to catch him,—now, when he is off his guard."

"Besides," whispered the old man into his wife's ear, "we may get a good-sized reward for a story like this. The government pays for information of the sort, — a hundred or even a couple of hundred roubles. She can get enough to make a fine dowry."

The woman was unable to answer so potent an argument, and commenced to scold her daughter.

"Channele! Are you bent upon being the ruin of us? Of yourself and us, too? We've got to throw off this burden at the earliest possible moment!"

They were not permitted to enter "The Aquarium." The Colonel-Commissary was very busy; "Dorothea" had but shortly before come upon the stage. She wore a short skirt of black silk, trimmed with flashing pearls. Her feet bare, her hair loose, she danced upon a wire that was stretched across the stage. The music was suddenly hushed. The hall was immersed in semi-darkness and the crowd rose in their places, while the officers and their lady guests stood up in their boxes. The eyes of all were riveted upon the stage, which was bathed in a blood-red light. Over the wire, with her black parasol in her hand, glided the dancer, twisting and turning her supple body. The dancer's skirt was

very black so that the brightness of her bare legs should shine with all the greater contrast against the red background. The wire, too, was quite high, so that all might view the "shapeliest legs in the world." The audience stood enraptured at the sight of the harmonious velvety lines and the supple symmetry of the performer's limbs. Through the shining skin could be discerned the blue veins, which, from the blood-red illumination took on a reddish tint, looking like little ribbons of blood that were wound around the white beauty of her legs. . . . The red veins delighted the entire house, the women even more than the men. And when the dancer gave a sudden spring into the air. crossing her legs like two swan's necks, a shout of joy broke out. A second later and the dancer was again standing upon the wire. The spectators seized their champagne glasses, bowed towards her and shouted their approbation, to which she replied with a graceful courtesy. . . .

It was at this juncture that the Colonel-Commissary, who was standing very close to the stage devouring the dancer with his glance, was informed that some Jew and his daughter wanted to see him. He sent them both to the devil, and resumed his attentions to the dancer.

But Reb Melech would not take "no" for an answer. "I'll wait here all night," he replied, in fear that if he should go home and postpone his mission until the next day the culprit would have time to disappear and harbor malice towards those who knew his secret. An indefinable spirit of vengeance came over the old man. He desired to have Mottke seized that very night, while he lay sleeping and had no thought of danger. The idea had become almost an obsession, and Reb Melech was impatient for its immediate fulfillment.

Soon the Colonel-Commissary and his friends,—a staff-officer and a judge—found themselves in their private room, where, with flowers and champagne, they awaited the wire-walker. Not long after Krumashatka, the handsome young man who sold jewels to the café singers, brought in "Dorothea" in his arms, and the "director" ran after him, breathing with difficulty. The company greeted the dancer with a loud hurrah. She took an easy jump, landing on the soft divan.

"Now then, Krumashatka, show us what you have!"

cried the Colonel-Commissary.

"Two costly rings set with flaming rubies, bought from the Petrograd pawnbroker, at whose place they were pawned by the "Queen of the Pearls."

"Let's see 'em."

And the Colonel-Commissary passed the rings to the young staff-officer, who kneeled down before the wire-walker and placed them upon the large toe of either foot.

Again the servant entered, telling the Colonel that some people desired an audience with him.

"Your highness, the Jew refuses to go away. He is here with his wife and daughter. They say that they have something of great importance to tell you."

"What do they want of me, anyway? Didn't I tell

them to come to my office tomorrow?"

"They say it's a matter that you must know about without a moment's delay," replied the servant, whom Reb Melech had paid in advance for his persistence.

"Perhaps they want to sell you their daughter. They know you're a woman-eater, and that you like pretty girls, especially Jewish ones," laughed the judge.

The Colonel-Commissary was highly flattered by the

compliment, and turned to the servant with a genial smile.

"Is this Jew's daughter good-looking, eh?"

"Very. A beauty, a prize."

"If that's the case, show them right in."

"No, no. Not here. You go out to them. There's a lady here," objected the judge pointing to the dancer. "Perhaps she has an aversion towards such scenes."

"I'm afraid to leave you people here alone with my pretty little bird," replied the Colonel. "You might tell her a lot of bad things about me while I was gone. As for you," he continued, speaking to the judge, "I'm not afraid at all. It's this rascal here," and he indicated the young officer. "These dashing youngsters take all our little birdies away, the scamps!"

"In that event," suggested the director, "you may receive your callers here." He pointed to the adjacent ante-room with panes of ground glass in the wall. "Thus the Colonel will at the same time be close to his little birdie and be able to receive his visitors."

"Bring them into that room, then," ordered the Colonel. The servant left.

The Colonel went into the ante-room to meet his strange callers, and his friends gave themselves up to drinking. The director disappeared, promising to return with a new brand of champagne and Krumashatka went off to some business he had in another room. The wire-walker, who was now queen of the two men that had remained with her, coquetted with both and roused their desires, not through passion but through habit, and through a desire to vex the Colonel-Commissary. She laughed and showed her little white teeth that charmed the judge to the verge of madness.

Suddenly, from the room into which the Colonel had gone, the dancer heard the sound of a young girl's weeping. There was something familiar in the voice or the crying of the girl. The wire-walker stopped stock still, as if in a trance. Then she arose from the divan, glided softly over to the door, opened it slightly and looked in. She beheld Channele before the Colonel, drying her tears with her handkerchief. At her side was her father, scolding her.

"Tell the Colonel-Commissary everything, just as you would your own father. Tell him exactly what your sweetheart told you, — exactly as you told it to me at home."

The wire-walker guessed immediately what it was all about. She turned pale, but managed to close the door and return to her guests.

"Feminine curiosity I call that! She hears a woman's voice and she simply must play the eavesdropper!"

"She's jealous of the Colonel," replied the judge to the young officer. "She's afraid he'll find some new favorite. Isn't that so?" he asked, turning to the dancer and taking her hand.

"What then?" she retorted. "Shall I be jealous of you, with that bald head of yours?" And she slapped the top of the judge's head, laughing.

She knew that in the other room they were talking about Mottke. One thing suddenly became clear to her—she must save Mottke's life. First of all, she must manage to detain the Colonel until next morning, by which time Mottke would have gone off to work, and would not be at home when called for by the police.

She seized a bottle of champagne, filled the glasses and shouted to her companions, "Drink!" In order

to rouse the jealousy of the Colonel she placed her bare legs in the lap of the young officer. She caressed him with her feet, and the young officer kissed her limbs.

A moment later the Colonel-Commissary came into the room red in the face with anger, pulling at his moustache and talking as if to himself.

"A very important case. . . . Mighty interesting. . . . I've got to do something about it at once. . . ."

Mari was not listening to him. She embraced the young officer with her bare legs as if they were tender hands.

"Look, you're in danger!" And he pointed to Marl and the officer.

"Brother," replied the Colonel, "duty calls. . . . Law and duty before pleasure. A very interesting case. Well, well! A fine fiancé indeed!" Then he rang for a servant.

"What! Have you gone crazy! Where are you going? Are you going to leave her here with him? I'm superfluous here," objected the judge. "When they're together they don't even see me."

"Let him go, let him go!" cried Mari. "And I'll dance for your special pleasure, gentlemen, the serpent-dance that the régisseur has just taught me. Wait a moment, until he's gone." She seized the young officer's glass, drank from it and then passed it to his lips.

"A fine figure you cut, Chvostov! I guess we're both old duffers. All played out, from the looks of things," laughed the judge, who was by this time half drunk.

"If that's the way things stand," began the Colonel, "I'll not leave until you perform the serpent-dance.

You haven't danced it for me yet. And here you're going to dance it for these people!"

"I'll not dance until you've gone. Go! Go!"

"A fine state of affairs, Chvostov, devil take you!" bellowed the old judge.

"And I refuse to leave until you dance," retorted the Colonel obstinately. "And—go to the deuce!" he cried at the servant, who had just entered in response to his ring.

"I'll not dance so long as you remain here," teased Mari. "Chvostov, bring me a pillow!" she suddenly commanded.

Chvostov meekly obeyed and remained standing in his place.

"And now off with you, - off to your duties."

"I will not go. I will stay right here," he replied, resolutely.

"Then send those Jews of yours to the devil and sit down like a sensible person. Here you go and invite guests, and then leave me alone with them. A fine gallant you are!" And she brought her silk hand-kerchief to her eyes.

"That's so. She's right, Chvostov," agreed the officer and the judge. "You ought to apologize to her."

"I'll not listen to him! I won't!" sobbed Mari.

"Now see what you've done, Chvostov, with your Jews. You've insulted her and you've spoiled the evening for us."

"Guilty!" pleaded Chvostov, striking himself over the heart. "The law commands and duty calls. But if she'll promise to do the serpent-dance, then I'll tell the Jews to go to the deuce and I'll remain here."

A few moments later Chvostov was standing at the door, speaking with Reb Melech. He spoke in loud

tones, so that the judge and the officer should hear that the case was really very urgent.

"You go home now, and be sure not to repeat a word of this to a living soul. What time does he come to you, to see your daughter tomorrow?"

"He comes every evening after work. Usually around six o'clock."

"Very fine. I'll be waiting for him at your home with my assistants. We'll do it very quietly, without any scenes. Agreed?"

"Agreed," answered Reb Melech.

"And now go home. Don't say a word to anybody. You'll get a reward from me, too, for the information."

Mari pricked her ears so as to catch every word of the conversation.

"An important case, — decidedly interesting," said the Colonel, returning to his friends. "I really ought to go at once; the law calls, but my heart doesn't let me answer," he added, pointing to Mari. "But I've fixed it so that my heart may be at ease and the law may not suffer. It takes brains, that's all. And now, my little kitten, the dance. You owe it to me . . ."

"Yes. You owe it to him," chimed the other men.

"He has plenty of time. Let him drink a couple of glasses, just as we did while he was busy with his callers."

"That's only fair, Chvostov. You're a lucky dog, indeed. See how considerate she is with you."

"My heart is entirely to blame. It's too good," answered the Colonel.

An hour later they were all drunk. Law and Justice, as symbolized in the persons of Commissary Chvostov and the judge, knelt before the wire-walker, who poured wine over their heads, for which kindness Law and Justice kissed her hand.

Then she danced the serpent-dance, which consisted of the girl standing on her hands with her legs in the air, twining them about each other like the white necks of two swans. Her legs seemed to embrace, to caress each other, to kiss and make love. . . . And thus she kept her guests there through the whole night and far into the next day, allowing them to leave at last, drunk with wine and her charms.

Scarcely had she released Chvostov from her embrace, in which she had held him prisoner till late that morning, when she rushed forth into the street, hailed a droshke and drove off in search of Mottke.

She went first directly to his home. He was not there. . . .

CHAPTER XVII

"CHANNELE! WHY?"

MOTTKE woke up that morning feeling particularly refreshed after a sound night's sleep. The fact that he had opened his heart to Channele, and that now she knew everything, — that he was not Kanarik, but Mottke, — filled him with the sensation of having been born anew. Whatever his confession should eventually cost him, he thought, — even if she should break off their match, the mere fact that she now knew everything rendered him happy. It seemed to him that only since yesterday, since the time of his confession, had he really been betrothed to Channele. For at first Kanarik was the fiancé, — it was Kanarik who went walking with Channele. Yesterday he had cast Kanarik back into the stream whence he had risen, and now Mottke was really Channele's sweetheart.

With the hearty purpose of a person who builds his future with his own hands, Mottke rose that morning earlier than usual, fresh and ready for work. He harnessed his horses and drove down to the railroad station to receive a consignment of frozen fish that had come from Russia for a customer. He was filled with unwonted zest for his labors, and as he rode along he planned that night to ask Channele to write a letter to his mother, asking her to come to Warsaw. But no. "Perhaps it's better for me to go back to the village

and buy myself a passport," he thought. He was anxious to discuss this and other matters with Channele; he would do exactly as she counselled.

As soon as Mottke arrived at the market with his fish, his fellow drivers told him that a certain woman — "one of the real things" — had come in a droshke and had been inquiring after him. It had been a wonder to Mottke that he had not seen the wire-walker since giving her over to "The Aquarium." The woman who had been making inquiries could be none other than Mari. He spat out upon hearing the news. "May evil dreams plague her," he snarled, and returned to his work, unloading the fish from his wagon. A moment later a droshke drew up beside his vehicle, and Mottke noticed a familiar face within; the occupant was beckoning to him.

"A nightmare plague you!" he said to himself. "What does she want of me?" He walked over to the droshke.

"Escape and save your life as soon as possible! The police are after you! Chvostov knows everything!"

Mottke turned pale, bit his lips, but asked, in a quiet voice, "What? You informed against me?"

"Not I. Your sweetheart, Channele went to the Commissary yesterday with her father, and told him everything."

"Whom are you trying to tell this story to? May fire consume your eyes! Channele gave me away? If you've said nothing, then nobody has."

"For God's sake, the police are after you! Get into a droshke and ride after me. I've got some money at home. We must leave the city at once."

"Aha! So that's your trick, is it? I see what you're up to, now. You want to get me away from Channele,

do you? Run off with me? You needn't say another word; I see through it all now. So Chvostov is no longer good enough for you, eh? You've got such costly earrings in your ears, and yet, behind his back . . ."

"Mottke, for the love of God, there's no time to lose in talking. I'm not trying to fool you away from Channele. I want you to save yourself, and to save me. Chvostov knows your whole story. Channele told him everything."

"Shut up, I tell you, or I'll slap your face for you right here in public. I'm going directly to Channele's. I'll question her. I'll find out whether she told."

"What are you doing! The police are waiting for you at Channele's!"

"Never mind. If Channele wants me to surrender to the police, then I'll surrender to the police. I'm not afraid. If you haven't given me away, then nobody has. And stop your talk about Channele, I warn you, or the cholera will seize you on the spot. Hey, driver!" He hailed a droshke.

"Where are you going?" asked Mari.

"None of your business. You ride back to Chvostov. Give me away, if you wish. — Bah! What a cheap trick she tried, — what a mean deception to take me away from Channele!"

"Hey, driver! Take me to Pavia Street."

In vain did the dancer seek to impede him, fall on her knees before him in the entry of the Pavia Street dwelling and beg him to save his life, — his life and hers, and run off with her at once. Whither would he escape without his Channele? He thrust Mari from him, struck her, and shouted.

"I'm going right up to her. I'm not afraid. If she wants to hand me over to the police, let her do it."

At her uncle's where Channele was staying, they were not expecting Mottke so early. The uncle, who was now informed of everything, had arranged for Mottke's capture to take place later, in the evening when he would come on his regular visit. Channele was to leave the house some time before, while the police would be in hiding, ready to jump upon the murderer. Seeing Mottke at such an unexpected hour, the uncle was confused, but he soon regained his composure, and through both fear and cunning, he sought to dissemble.

"How is it that you're so early today?"

"I've got something to discuss with Channele, Is she here?"

"Where then should she be?" smiled the uncle, calling into the next room.

"Channele, Channele! See what an unexpected visitor you have!"

Channele was in the midst of her dressing. Hearing that Mottke was there she lost all desire to come out.

"She's dressing. She'll be right out. Just wait a moment. I'll be up shortly.

"Leah, Leah, bring in a glass of tea. Just see whom we have for a guest," he called to his wife, before leaving the room.

Mottke was left alone in the dining-room. He began to feel restless, concerned. "Channele," he called into the room where she was dressing. "Are you nearly ready?"

"In a moment," replied the girl, seeking to delay meeting him. 'How is it you come so early today? Has anything happened?"

"No. Nothing has happened. I want to tell you something."

She could prolong her dressing no further, and at last

had to go out to her lover. Fright was plainly written upon her features. Her face was white, and her hands trembled.

"Good God, you scared me so by coming here so early. . . . Unexpected. . . What has occured?"

"Channele, nothing at all has occured," began Mottke, smiling with the mere pleasure of beholding her again. "Why were you so frightened?"

Seeing that Mottke was ignorant of the true state of affairs, Channele regained her self-confidence. "Nothing," she replied. "Only when you're not expecting anybody, and he shows up all of a sudden. Really what has happened? Something surely must have taken place—"

Mottke interpreted the girl's uneasiness as coming from the confession that he had made to her the day before, and attributed her fright to his sudden appearance. He took her by the hand; cold and trembling, she offered no resistance. He caressed her hair. "Are you still afraid of me, Channele?" he asked. "Channele, tell me, I want to know the whole truth. Doesn't our match please you any longer? Tell me. I'll do nothing at all. I'll wait just as long as you please, until you'll stop being afraid of me."

"I'm not afraid of you. Why should I be afraid of you?" Suddenly the girl brought her hands to her face and burst into tears. "God, is this all true?"

Mottke was pierced to the heart. He wanted to lie down before her. Words failed him. All at once he jumped to his feet. "Channele," he cried, "I'll tell the police everything. If you wish it, I'll surrender myself, — tell the whole story. Do you wish it?"

For a moment Channele lost herself completely.

Then she recovered enough to ask, "Why? No, say nothing at all. Who need know of it?"

"Channele, my darling," cried the youth in ecstasy, falling before her feet and kissing the hem of her skirt.

Channele did not know what to do. She caressed his head, while he seized her hand and showered it with kisses.

"Channele," he begged, his voice quivering with entreaty, "then you will marry me?"

"Of course I'll marry you. Aren't we engaged?"

"And you'll forget everything?" Everything?"

"Of course I'll forget. Your lot and mine are now one."

"Channele!" . . . Mottke was speechless with happiness. He buried his face in her lap and wept, as he had wept once before, when he lay in the cellar and watched his mother sew his trousers. . . .

She stroked his hair with her cold hand.

Suddenly the door was cautiously opened and two officers crept into the room, revolvers in their hands. They advanced slowly, on tip-toe, so as not to be noticed by Mottke, and all at once they threw themselves upon him, waking him rudely from his dream of love.

Mottke's clear, childish eyes opened wide in surprise, looked about and beheld the officers in amazement. His strength seemed to ooze out of his body; he surrendered without a struggle. More with his eyes than his lips, he asked, "Channele! Why?"

The girl burst into a wailing and shrieking, and tottered into the next room.

Nobody knows why or how. But several days before the hearing Colonel-Commissary Chvostov summoned Channele and her father to his private office and berated them in frightful fashion, threatening to have them imprisoned if they would not, at the forthcoming investigation, deny that Mottke had ever told such a story to his sweetheart, and confess that they had trumped up the whole accusation.

And at the investigation Channele really denied before the judge that Mottke had ever told her anything. Nor was she the only one to testify in his favor. The Colonel-Commissary delivered such a favorable report that the judge ordered the immediate release of the suspect. Suddenly Mottke himself arose and repeated word for word the confession he had made to Channele. He described the murder of Kanarik with such minute details that there could no longer be any doubt of his guilt. The Colonel-Commissary sat through the recital as pale as a ghost, but Mottke was careful not to mention a word about the wire-walker's part in the deed. He took the entire guilt upon himself.

THE END

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